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WELSH POOL AND POWYS-LAND.

A HISTORY OF THE ANCIENT PRINCIPALITY AND LATER BARONY OF POWYS, AND OF THE TOWN AND CASTLE OF WELSH POOL.

BY

ROBERT OWEN,

(AUTHOR OF "WELSH POOL AND ITS ENVIRONS," "CEDEWAIN PLACE-NAMES," ETC.)

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WELSH POOL:

R. & M. OWEN, OPPOSITE THE TOWN HALL.

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The Town of Welsh Pool from the Castle.

WELSH POOL AND POWYS-LAND:

"A HISTORY OF THE TOWN AND BOROUGH OF WELSH POOL, AND THE SURROUNDING DISTRICT.[1]"

By ROBERT OWEN (Welsh Pool).

Chapter I.

INTRODUCTORY.

At the outset, it will be well to state that this history—extending from the earliest historical periods up to these latter days of the nineteenth century—does not attempt to give to its readers any minute details of the past annals of the district, nor is any attempt made to publish excerpts from contemporary documents: either task would be well-nigh an impossibility; and, moreover, to make a documentary chronicle of these pages would be a fruitless affair, when we consider that the work has already been accomplished, and that all documents bearing upon the annals of both town and province have, long since, been duly codified, translated, and published.[2] The primary object, then, of this history is to forge together, into one continuous chain, the links that bind one epoch of our local history with another: in other words—to take a "bird's-eye view" of the annals of our district, and to present them to the reader's eyes as one continuous whole. So far as the

[1] This was the title of the "Prize Essay", proposed for competition at the Powys Provincial Eisteddfod, held in Welsh Pool on June 13th and 14th, 1895, for which "Cynvelin" was adjudicated the successful candidate; and it is here enlarged, by request, under the wider head of "Welsh Pool and Powys-land", by the author, Mr. Robert Owen.

[2] Refer to the past volumes of *Montgomeryshire Collections*, *Archæologia Cambrensis*, and other similar publications.

writer is aware, this is the first attempt ever made to construct a continuous chronicle of events for that loosely-defined "geographical area" known as the PROVINCE OF POWYS.

To write a history of the ancient town and castle of Pool (which is the primary intention of the writer), and yet to ignore the general trend of events in the surrounding province, would be the means of seriously curtailing the mental range of vision, and of narrowing the historic horizon to the limits of the town and parish; or, *vice versâ*, to review the state of affairs in Powys-land, age by age, without due regard for the part played in its provincial annals by the stately stronghold of the noble CASTLE OF POWYS; and, in a lesser degree, by its dependent ville of La Pole (Welsh Pool), without a plentiful allusion to both town and castle, in such a review: would be to liken our paper to the time-worn simile of "*Hamlet*, with the Prince of Denmark omitted therefrom." The history of Powys-land has been so bound up, so interwoven, with that of the borough-town and its castle—and this intimate connection between the two began when Cadogan, "the Renowned Briton", came to Trallwng (Welsh Pool) in the early days of the twelfth century, and it has continued ever since—and their historic associations are so entwined, that there seems nothing incongruous in the idea of allowing the wide history of the ancient province to gradually narrow its area, bit by bit, as we approach more modern times, until it becomes practically merged in the records and channels of the borough-town. Our history, therefore, begins with the lives of the Kings of Old Powys, dealing with the stirring events that occurred in their days, and in which they were no mere passive spectators, and it finishes with a slight record of municipal progress in the town and borough, together with some events of local history up to the present day.

Geographically, the town of Pool is situated within the county and archdeaconry of Montgomery and

diocese of St. Asaph, and lies within the upper valley of the Severn,[1] twenty miles west of Shrewsbury and seven miles north-east of Montgomery, and is distant 176 miles from London. The town is built at the entrance of a deep valley, formed by the passage of the Nant y Caws, or Lledan brook, a stream which rises at Castle Caereinion, and flows into the Severn half-a-mile below the town. Upon its eastern side the town is open to the Severn valley; but on the west it is shut in by the lofty Golfa, a tract of moorland which extends in the direction of Meivod and Mathraval. Upon the north the Rhallt (Yr Allt) rises precipitously from the valley level, and slopes in swelling undulations towards Guilsfield; whilst a spur of this hill, known as the "Red Bank", abruptly terminates at the "top" of the town in a huge volcanic rock of greenish-grey basalt. To the south-west are the wooded slopes of Powis Castle Park; and crowning the undulating lawns and shady woodlands rises the picturesque structure of the ancient castle, built upon a rock of sandstone, from which it took its earliest name, "Castell Côch", or the Red Castle. Across the valley, the long level crest of Cefn Digoll (the "Long Mountain"), stretches for miles along the horizon, whilst to the north-east rises the noble Breiddin, with its triple crown—Craig Breiddin, Moel y Golfa, and Cefn y Castell—and its rock bound flanks, standing out as sentinel to the hill-country of the upper Severn. The Breiddin, indeed, has been aptly called "the *sentinel* of the Welsh hills"; for, once it is passed (to the east), we enter the great fertile plains of Shropshire and the English Midlands. The beautiful country to the west of Breiddin, in which the town and its castle are situated, is quite worthy of the title given to it by Llywarch Hên in the far-off sixth century, *Powys Paradwys Cymry* ("Powys, the Paradise of the Welsh"). And no less worthy is it of

[1] That portion of the Severn valley lying immediately below Welsh Pool was formerly known as *Ystrad Marchell* ("Marcella's Strath").

renown for the associations it bears in the chequered history of our Cymric Fatherland. These associations are especially recalled when the student of local history climbs the crest of the "Craig", or Moel y Golfa, and sees in front of him the camp of Caractacus upon the adjoining height of the Breiddin, or gazes at the solitary Wrekin and the distant spires of Shrewsbury, each with its memories of Cynddylan and Brochwel; or else turning westward, views below him places with names of such historical significance as Powis Castle, Montgomery, Meivod, Mathraval, Buttington, and Careghova. It is upon the rocky heights of this noble hill of Breiddin that the opening scene of our history is enacted.

> "A thousand years their cloudy wings expand
> Around me, and a dying glory smiles
> O'er the far times."—*Byron.*

The town of Welsh Pool lies distant less than two miles from Offa's Dyke, the *historical* boundary-line between England and Wales: this geographical consideration is important. Of still greater significance is the fact that the town is built upon the *western* banks of the Severn, and not upon its *eastern* side. Along the border-lands of England and Wales there is no better criterion for judging the respective predominance of the rival Anglo-Saxon and Celtic elements, in any given locality, than the witness of the *place-names.* In bringing this important witness to bear upon the case of our own neighbourhood, it will be found that *east* of Severn[1] the Anglo-Saxon nomenclature freely intersperses itself with that of the Welsh:—Buttington, Edderton, Hope, Leighton, Thornbury, Uppington and Woodliston, intermixed with Cilcewydd, Cletterwood, Criggion, Forden (Ffordd-hen), Mynllyn, Trefnant, Trelystan, and Trewern. These townships, by their names, clearly testify to the commingling of the rival nations within their limits, at a period prior to the fall

[1] We are dealing with the country-side lying upon the western slopes of the Long Mountain and Breiddin.

of Anglo-Saxondom (1066 A.D.). On the *western* side of the river we have a purely Celtic district: a district which at no time in its history was ever affected by Teutonic influences, and which, from among its place-names cannot produce one single instance of Anglo-Saxon nomenclature.[1]

In these pages, therefore, we shall be dealing with the records of a Celtic district undisturbed ever by Teutonic influences. Indeed, it may be said that the Celtic system of social polity survived for a considerable time in this district, and in other parts of Wales, after the purely Teutonic epoch had been supplanted in England by a *Romanesque* or Norman successor. In the end, the Celtic system, too, succumbed to the Romanesque, and it was during the long period of transition between the two systems (during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries) that our local history passes through its acutest stages.

In Teutonic Britain the *Village Community* (or *Township*) formed the unit of social polity, whereas, in Celtic Britain, the *Tribe* formed that unit. This all-important fact should not be lost sight of, especially by students of Welsh history. A record of the great princely tribes that ruled in Powys-land will, therefore, of necessity, occupy a large proportion of the pages of this short history.

During the course of this history, local society may be said to have passed through three distinct phases; and so, before proceeding further, we will now indicate how these phases can be roughly grouped under their several headings:—

(*a*) The *Tribal* Epoch—which extends from the first stage of local history to the days of Griffith ab Gwenwynwyn—that thirteenth-century ruler of Powys who gave the finishing stroke in the overthrow of the ancient Celtic system in these parts.

(*b*) The *Feudal* Epoch—begins with the infusion of

[1] The name *Guilsfield*, be it noted, is not of Anglo-Saxon origin (*vide* p. 189).

Romanesque ideas and methods into Powys-land, introduced, either by pure necessity or deliberate choice, by the four rulers of Upper Powys :—Owen Cyveiliog, Gwenwynwyn, Griffith, and Owen de la Pole. The manorial system became thoroughly acclimatised during the time of Griffith, a time which marked the final extinction of the ancient Celtic monarchy of Britain. This period covers the time when the district lay under the iron grasp of the Norman barons, and its final break-up synchronises with two contemporary events of great local significance, viz., the political amalgamation of Wales and the Marches with England, and the death of the last feudal Lord of Powys.

(*c*) The *Municipal* Epoch represents the modern element of our history. It starts with the *bye-laws* of 1570, which the burgesses of Pool thought fit to issue for the better government of their town ; and likewise the Incorporating Charter (which the Crown granted) in 1615 ; from which period our history narrows itself to the limits of the municipal borough, the increasing progress and prosperity of which are dealt with in a summary of modern events in the last few pages of this history.

CHAPTER II.

ANCIENT POWYS.

Britain, in the time of the Romans, was inhabited by the CELTS, a race belonging to the great Aryan family of nations, who in the present day inhabit those portions of our island left untouched by the Teutonic conquests of the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries. Ethnologists have divided the Celtic tribes of the British Islands into two groups—the *Brythonic* and the *Goidelic*. The tribes which inhabited the country now called Wales were mostly Goidels—the Silures and Demetæ in the south and the Cangi in the north ; but in the valleys of Central Wales there dwelt a

Brythonic people, the ORDOVICES, who occupied the territory lying between the Severn, the Dee and the Teme—a stretch of country which afterwards became known as POWYS[1] (Powis, or Powys-land), embracing the whole of the area covered by the present county of Montgomery with parts of adjacent counties.

Our history opens with the long and gallant struggle carried on by the Silures under their intrepid leader, CARACTACUS (Caradoc), against the armies of Imperial Rome. For nearly nine years he had defied the Roman army; but, at last, a determined effort was made to bring about the subjection of the dauntless mountaineers (of South Wales). With this purpose in view, in the year 51 (A.D.), Ostorius, the commander of the legions in Britain, having subdued the Goidels of North Wales, and having pacified the Brigantes of the north, now turned his attention to the tribe "which neither severity nor clemency could induce to put up with Roman rule".[2] In terse but eloquent language, Tacitus describes the last fight and the downfall of Caractacus.

Leaving the north, Ostorius hastens to the scene of action with a large body of soldiery, and marches towards the Silurian territory (*Itum inde in Siluras*).[3] Before he had penetrated Wales very far, he found that Caractacus had entrenched himself upon some inaccessible mountains (*montibus arduis*) in the country of the Ordovices. These mountains have been identified, almost beyond a doubt, with the Breiddin Hills,[4] five miles to the north-east of Welsh Pool. Ostorius had already reached the borders of Siluria before he discovered the whereabouts of Caractacus, so deflecting eastward the Roman general now marches to attack

[1] The name *Powys* is akin to the Latin *pagus* and the French *pays* (a country).

[2] Rhys' *Celtic Britain*, p. 80.

[3] Taciti, *Annales*, xii, 33.

[4] The question is fully discussed in vol. viii of the *Montgomeryshire Collections*.

the British king in his stronghold upon the precipitous heights of the "Brython's" Rock (Craig Breiddin): in doing this he must have passed the site of the present town of Welsh Pool.[1] Before reaching the base of the hills the Severn had to be crossed, and this was done at a shifting ford (*amnis vado incerto*), which has been identified with the Ordder Ford,[2] near the camp at Old Mills (Trewern). Then began the arduous climb of the hill, made doubly difficult and perilous by the pitiless flight of arrows and the huge boulder stones hurled down from above by the defending party. Before the battle began the champion of Britain made a gallant speech, urging his warriors to fight for country, home and freedom, and calling upon them to make a solemn vow to him that none would shrink back in the coming struggle. The Romans now had reached the giddy crest of the hill, and tearing down the rampart of loose stones, rushed into the enemy's camp. Then commenced the hand-to-hand struggle. Caractacus and his Britons fought long and well, but to no purpose; for their limbs and bodies were unprotected by any guard, save by the thrust and parrying of their own weapons; whilst the Romans were well equipped with helmets, breastplates and shields. The British ranks began to bend, at last they gave way, the battle became a rout, and Caractacus was overthrown, but managed to make his escape from the scene of carnage. His subsequent history is too well known to need repetition here.

It was not until the year 78 that Rome completed the subjection of Caractacus' neighbours and allies—the Ordovices of Mid-Wales. Tacitus describes this conquest in his *Agricola* (cap. 12). It was in the

[1] *Vide* Mr. Wynne Ffoulkes' paper in *Arch. Camb.*, vol. ii (N.S.).

[2] Ordder Ford = "The Ford of 'Gorddwr'", probably from the Ordovices. The Breiddin is situated in the Manor of *Gorthor*, or *Gordowr*. In the Welshpool Borough *Perambulation* of 1818 this ford is called the *Wrther* Ford. Compare *Gordowr*, *Wrther*, *Gorthor*, *Orddwr*, *Ordover*, *Ordovix*.

summer-time that Agricola, the Roman general, landed in Britain. His soldiers, expecting there would be no more expeditions that year, were anticipating a winter of ease and enjoyment; while the natives were making preparations to take advantage of their inactivity and of the inclemency and darkness of the season. Not long before Agricola's arrival, the Ordovices had surprised a troop of cavalry which was stationed upon the borders of their territories, and had put almost every man to the sword. He therefore determined to commence active operations against the foe without undue delay. Notwithstanding the fact that the winter season was fast approaching, and that the soldiers were scattered all over Britain, he assembled together certain veterans from the legions and a small body of auxiliaries, and, placing himself at their head, he boldly advanced into the hostile territories. The Ordovices declined to meet the Romans upon the plain; thereupon Agricola divided his forces into two bodies. He led the advance party in person, in order to excite the confidence and to arouse the enthusiasm of his followers. The engagement that ensued was a most sanguinary one, as the Ordovices, scorning to yield, were almost extirpated by the well-armed and well-disciplined hosts of Rome.

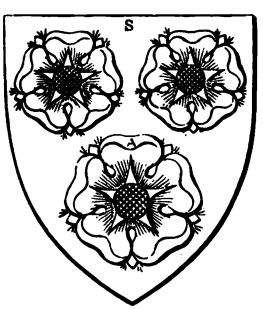
After the overthrow of the Ordovices in A.D. 78, a mist of impenetrable gloom seems to cloud the history of Central Wales for more than 300 years, without one single gleam of light thrown upon it by either contemporary document or voice of tradition. Tacitus evidently did not exaggerate when he spoke of the annihilation of the Brythonic tribe. Government of a desert waste is not fraught with actions that would tempt the hand of the scribe to chronicle, or of the bard to formulate into folk-song!

That the Roman legions had their stations in this land, as elsewhere in Britain, cannot be denied: the important town of MEDIOLANUM, situated probably at Clawdd Coch, near Llanymynech, and the stations at

Caersws, *Caerhowel*,[1] and *Y Gaerfawr* testify to this. A Roman trackway is traced from the Gaerfawr through Welsh Pool to Caerhowel by the aid of certain place-names appearing in an almost straight line upon the map: this road seems to be a portion of one extending from Mediolanum to Caersws. Of relics belonging to the Roman era, actually found within the immediate vicinity of Welsh Pool, four only have been brought to light: the brass coin of Nero Claudius Drusus found at Maes Gwastad, a brass *Hadrian* and two smaller coins found at the old Domen (at the Bowling Green), the stone mortarium at Pool Quay, and the bronze boar[2] at the Gaerfawr.

. . . . .

At the close of the fourth century—at the time that the Roman power began to totter in Britain, in anticipation of its final downfall, and the legions were being withdrawn from all the outposts of the empire to defend the Imperial City from the continual irruptions of the advancing Teutonic tribes—at this time there arose a figure in the north that seems to have stepped out of the gloom and have assumed, without opposition from any quarter, the supreme sovereign power over the whole of the western and northern portions of Britain. This man was CUNEDDA, about whom Welsh literature has so much to say, yet not enough to give us a comprehensive view of his history.[3] By virtue of his mysterious powers and privileges as *Gwledig*, or *Dux Britanniarum*, he found the means of bestowing upon his sons and other members of



CUNEDDA WLEDIG.
Sable; three roses *argent*, barbed *vert*.

[1] Commonly, but incorrectly, called *Caer Flôs*.
[2] The symbol of the 20th Legion (stationed at Chester).
[3] Rhys' *Celtic Britain*, p. 116.

his family the rule overy many districts, extending from the Forth and Clyde in the north to the Severn Sea in the south-west; and also of bequeathing to his descendants, for many centuries,[1] the supreme rule over the CYMRY.[2] We are told that he was a Brython of the north, that he was a kinsman of Constantine the Great, and that he held the high position of a *Dux* of the empire. The Welsh chroniclers are unanimous in their praise of his military prowess and his pious munificence, and relate that he held his court at Carlisle, where his retinue on the wall was nine hundred horse, and that his title was "King of the Island of Britain",[3] and that he was "the first to bestow lands and privileges upon the Church in Britain". That Cunedda himself ever came to Wales is doubtful; but we find that his sons gave their names to several districts in Mid-Wales. His son EINION (who succeeded him as *Gwledig* of the Britons) gave his name to Caereinion—the district extending westward of Welsh Pool in the direction of Mallwyd; Arwystl gave his name to the cantref containing Llanidloes and Caersws and the surrounding parishes; after Ceredig was Ceredigion (Cardigan) named; and in the like manner Meirion[4] and Edeyrn gave their names to Merioneth and Edeyrnion respectively. Professor Rhys sums up Cunedda's influence in our district in these words:[5] "The centre of gravity, so to speak, of the power of Cunedda in Wales was in the country of the Ordovices, a Brythonic people that does not seem to have resisted his rule."

The last Roman soldier had departed from this island in 409, and for forty years Britain was left to itself.

In 449 the first wave of Teutonic invasion reached our shores when the Jutes landed in Kent. In 477

[1] The last ruler of Wales descended from Cunedda was Llewelyn III, who was slain in 1282.

[2] The people of the British Confederation (*Cym-bro*).

[3] Iolo MSS., p. 147.

[4] Grandson of Cunedda.

[5] Rhys' *Celtic Britain*, p. 119.

the South Saxons arrived, and before the end of the century the West Saxons had followed them, and then the "making of England" began. But the work of conquest and extermination was a long one, lasting more than a hundred years. It was a time of bitter suffering for the people of Britain, for it meant the complete subjugation of their race (so far as eastern Britain was concerned) under a strange and barbarous people. The Britons fought long and stubbornly, but all in vain, for the enemy were being continually reinforced from their homes beyond the sea, and slowly but surely swept onward over the doomed island, slaying men, women and children, burning churches, hamlets and homesteads, sacking and destroying cities, and leaving the fair land of Lloegr[1] one vast desert.

For many years the inhabitants of the lower Severn Valley had been watching, with grave apprehensions, the deadly advance; and now gradually the Pagans were approaching the three great cities of the lower valley—Bath, Gloucester and Cirencester. Nearer and nearer they came: at last, in 577, they had reached the waters of the Severn and Avon, and then was fought the momentous *Battle of Deorham*,[2] which ended in the overthrow of the Britons and the deaths of Commagil, Condidan, and Farinmagil, the respective governors of the Three Cities.[3] The doom of the cities was now sealed, and fire and sword soon swept this trilateral stronghold of the West, and its inhabitants, off the face of the land; and for a space of more than a hundred years, Bath, Gloucester and Cirencester lay desolate and forsaken.

[1] *Lloegr* = South Britain.

[2] *Vide* Dean Spence's *City of the White Walls.*

[3] It is the *Saxon Chronicle* that mentions the names of these British generals. Because of the similarity of names, both Professor Rhys and Dean Spence suggest that Condidan and Commagil are identically the same persons as Cynddylan of Powys and his brother Caranmael, thus representing them as falling at Deorham some months prior to the sacking of Uriconium; but Dr. Guest, in his *Conquest of the Severn Valley*, does not entertain this theory.

Having gained the entrance to the fruitful and pleasant valley of the Severn, CEAWLIN, the West-Saxon king, made no delay in bringing together all the strength of the invading forces, and then, with terrible onslaught, he and his warriors rushed like a devastating flood through the length of the valley, until they came to the borders of the great midland kingdom of the Cymry—Powys—their *Paradise.* This country, which extended from the banks of the Wye right up to the walls of Chester, and from beyond the solitary Wrekin to the huge Plynlumon, had for its principal city, the "White Town", or TREN[1] (which has been identified with *Uriconium*), and for the seat of its court, PENGWERN (Shrewsbury). This land, then, the restless Ceawlin, with his doughty thanes and fierce ceorls, resolved to take, by means of blood and sword, from the hands of its original possessors.

Indeed, it is in connection with this Teutonic invasion of the Severn Valley in 577 that the first explicit mention of Powys was made. This was in the *Marwnad*, or *Elegy to Prince Cynddylan*, written by Llywarch Hên, one of the earliest of the Welsh bards, who was himself an eye-witness of the tragedies that he relates in his mournful verses. His hero, CYNDDYLAN, was Prince of Pengwern Powys in the latter half of the sixth century, and to this gallant son of King Cyndrwyn was assigned, by a stern fate, the duty of confronting the dread power of the barbarian, who had now advanced to the very threshold of his own kingdom.

> "Cynddylan, with heart like the ice of winter,
> Cynddylan, with heart like the fire of spring."[2]

The *Elegy* gives no succinct and continuous account

[1] *Tren* was likewise the name of a river, none other than the river *Tern*, which flows into the Severn in the vicinity of the ancient Uriconium (now Wroxeter).

[2] All the translations here given are those of Dr. Guest, taken from his *Conquest of the Severn Valley.* (*Arch. Journal*, vol. xix, pp. 193, *et seq.*).

of the many startling events as they occurred during this invasion; but, from what we can learn from its tale, it seems, that after a long and gallant struggle, Cynddylan and his brothers were slain, the British forces were either cut to pieces or else dispersed to the hill-country, and Tren was taken, then sacked and destroyed, and the royal palace on the Rock of Hydwyth, Cynddylan's hall at Pengwern, was given over to the flames.

Llywarch Hên, in his opening stanzas, portrays himself as escaping with the women of his household from the scene of carnage to a neighbouring height. There from the crest of this hill (probably the Wrekin) he views with piteous grief the destruction of his dear land of Powys, and views with horror how "the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace."

(1) "Stand forth, maidens, and survey Cynddylan's land,
Pengwern's palace is it not in flames?
Woe to the youth that longs for good fellowship!

(5) "Cynddylan, bright pillar of his country,
Chain-bearer,[1] obstinate in the fight,
Protected Tren, his father's town.

(6) "Cynddylan, bright intelligence departed,
Chain-bearer, obstinate in the host,
Protected Tren as long as he was living.

(7) "Cynddylan, with heart of greyhound,
When he descended to the turmoil of battle,
A carnage he carved out.

(8) "Cynddylan, with heart of hawk
Was the true, enraged . . . .
Cub of Cyndrwyn, the stubborn one.

(12) "Cynddylan, of the Powys purple, gallant is he!
The stranger's refuge, their life's anchor,
Son of Cyndrwyn, the much-to-be-lamented."

The tribans (triplets) which follow furnish the sequel

[1] This refers to the special badge of Powysian royalty: the *Eurdorch*, or gold chain of twisted links. Sir Walter Scott, in his *Betrothed*, mentions the *Eurdorch* as having been worn by Gwenwynwyn at his Easter feast at Powys Castle.

of the tragedy. First of all comes the lament over the ruined hall at Pengwern (stanzas 18 to 33).

"The Hall of Cynddylan is dark
To-night, without fire, without bed!
I'll weep awhile, afterwards I shall be silent.

"The Hall of Cynddylan! Dark
Its roof, after the fair assemblage!
Alas, its end is sad!

"The Hall of Cynddylan is forlorn
To-night, since it has owned no lord.
Ah, death will not leave me long!

"The Hall of Cynddylan is gloomy
To-night, without fire, without songs,
Tears are running down my cheeks.

"The Hall of Cynddylan, it pierces my heart
To see it roofless, fireless.
Dead is my chief! Yet I am living!

"The Hall of Cynddylan pierces my heart
Every hour, when I think of the mighty gatherings
I remember, closing round the fire-hearth."

Then the bard pictures the eagles of war crying aloud for the heart-blood of Cynddylan the fair. The one eagle is hovering around the deserted halls of Pengwern, the other is sailing down the valley of the Tren (Tern): both upon the same terrible quest.

(34) "The Eagle of Eli, loud's its cry,
He has swallowed fresh drink,
Heart-blood of Cynddylan the fair.

(35) "The Eagle of Eli screams aloud
To-night, in the blood of men he revels,
He is in the wood.[1]

(37) "The Eagle of Eli hath afflicted to-night
The vale of illustrious Meisyr,[2]
And Brochwel's land long affronted.

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[1] This may refer to Shrewsbury (Pengwern), or to the "Argoed", the forest of Kinnerley.

[2] Meisyr was Cynddylan's sister. The Vale of Meisyr is supposed to be identical with *Meser-feld*, a name given to the country around Oswestry. There is a *Bryn-cae Meisyr* beyond Berriew.

(41) "The Eagle of Pengwern screamed aloud to-night,
For the blood of men he watched.
Tren may indeed be called a ruined town."

Then comes the rescue of the bodies of Cynddylan and his companions, the hasty arrangements for the funeral, and the secret burial at night-time in the churches of Bassa (Baschurch).

(17) "My heart has great misery
In joining together the coffin-boards.
(Fair is the flesh of Cynddylan,
The common grief of a hundred hosts.)

(44) "The churches of Bassa, there rests
To-night, there ends, there shrinks within himself,
The shelter in battle, heart of the men of Argoed!"[1]

And lastly follows the stanzas descriptive of the "White Town":—

(52) "The White Town in the bosom of the wood,
There has ever been of its lustyhood,
On the surface of the grass, the blood!

(53) "The White Town in the country side,
Its lustyhood, its gray thoughtfulness,[2]
The blood under the feet of its warriors!

(54) "The White Town in the valley!
Joyful its troops with the common spoil
Of battle, its people are they not gone?

(56) "The White Town between Tren and Traval?
More common was the blood
On the surface of the grass, than the ploughed fallow."

Dr. Guest, in his *Conquest of the Severn Valley*, seems to leave no element of doubt as to the allocation of the "White Town". He sums up his case in the following incisive words:—

"Cynddylan's usual place of abode may have been on Careg Hydwyth,[3] but the great town, 'his father's town', which figures

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[1] Argoed—the country between the Severn and the Dee. The name still survives in a township of Kinnerley parish.

[2] A poetic imagery, representing the strong young warriors and the grey-haired elders of the city of Tren.

[3] The Rock of Pengwern, upon which now stands Shrewsbury Castle.

so largely in the poem under the name of Tren, must have been the capital of his district. There was but one place which in Roman times had any pretensions to be so considered, and I believe that Tren and the 'White Town' alike represent the Roman Uriconium."

> "Slain were my comrades all at once,
> Cynan, Cynddylan, Cynraith,
> Defending Tren, the wasted city."

Thus ends the sad and sombre opening scene in the history of Powys-land!

. . . . .

Seven years had passed since the fall of Uriconium, and it seemed as if the fertile plains of Salop had been permanently lost to the Cymry; yet the time was now approaching for the British princes to be up and doing their part in the struggle for home and freedom. In 584, Ceawlin led his forces northward with the intention of bringing the line of West-Saxon conquest up to the very banks of the sacred Dee and to the walls of the great city of Chester; but, upon reaching the borders of TEYRNLLWG (the country now comprising Cheshire), he was met by a large combination of the British forces, and at the *Battle of Fethanleag* (Faddiley) the tide of war was changed, his army was overthrown, and the West-Saxon levies were driven back southward—never to return. The *Saxon Chronicle* acknowledges the decisiveness of this defeat, when it says: "After the battle Ceawlin turned him to his own country." And may not the credit of the overthrow of Wessex in these parts be given to Cyngen, the puissant Lord of Teyrnllwg and Chester, who was also King of Powys? This Cyngen, the son of Cadell of Teyrnllwg, was the founder of the great college of BANGOR ISCOED, and his noble foundation would have been the first to suffer if ever the Pagan Northmen had gained a footing in the valleys of the Dee and the Weaver. The overthrow of Ceawlin at Fethanleag was the means of consolidating the whole of Powys under the rule of one sovereign, and this auspicious event was likewise the means of again

establishing the throne of Powys-land upon the Rock of Pengwern; and once more the Hall of Cynddylan was gay with the glad sound of the harp, and voice of the minstrels, and with the merry talk of the warriors and courtiers at the festal board of their prince.

CHAPTER III.

ECCLESIASTICAL SETTLEMENTS.

During the life-and-death struggles of Anglo-Saxon and Briton throughout the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries, the Catholic Church in Wales seems to have passed through the period of her greatest activity—an activity which manifested itself not only in her outward organisation, but also in the wonderful efflorescence of spiritual life amongst her children, which has been the cause of posterity treating those otherwise dark days as pre-eminently the Era of the Saints.

The mountainous tract of land lying between the Irish and Severn seas—now known to us as WALES—had, up to the time of the first Saxon invasion, hardly come under the influence of the Cross. Its mountain fastnesses still sheltered the votaries of a fast-dying paganism; for the rude tribes who dwelt amidst the inaccessible wastes and forests of this wild land (though permeated by Roman roads) had never submitted themselves to the civilising influences of Roman rule, and probably had never come within the pale of Christendom. The Goidelic and Ivernian tribes which then inhabited our Wales still clung, for the most part, to the old heathen rites, and refused to conform to the new faith which had spread throughout the Romanised parts of the island.

After the Roman evacuation of Britain, however, a revolution occurred in the mountain land, which completely changed the religious, political and racial conditions of the country. This change was chiefly

brought about by the two great events of early Welsh history (which have already been dealt with in the last chapter).

The arrival of Cunedda and his fellow Brythons in Wales, followed by the great influx of Christian refugees from the plains of Lloegr during the Saxon advance, are, without a doubt, the two events of initial importance in the history of the Cymry; yet, as we are dealing only with ecclesiastical matters in the present chapter, it will suffice to state that these two events combined brought about the organisation and permanent settlement of the Welsh Church and the evangelising of the land. As there is no evidence of Christianity existing amongst the Brythonic inhabitants of Central Wales at any period earlier than the first half of the fifth century, it therefore seems probable that they did not become subject to the faith until after the arrival of their northern compatriots under Cunedda and his sons. Christian faith and discipline, however, did not settle down into orthodox channels until the arrival in these parts of a distinguished visitor from the Gallican Church, whose contribution to the building-up of the Church in Powys we shall now proceed to relate.

Next to St. David, Patron of Wales, the man who seems to have left the greatest impression upon the history of the British Church was St. Germanus (Garmon), the celebrated Bishop of Auxerre, who flourished in the first half of the fifth century. He was indeed a born leader of men, and the influence he exercised was powerfully felt in his own day and for centuries afterwards: we may venture to say that that influence extends down to the present day, for to him may be ascribed the territorial organisation of the ancient Church of the Cymry. The primary intention of Germanus's two missions to Britain in 429 and 447 was the extirpation of the Pelagian heresy, which at that time had gained great headway in Britain, especially in Powys-land, in which country the saint's

missionary activity seems to have been centralised: possibly the heresies of Pelagius (Morgan) took deepest root here because of the fact of this great hæresiarch being himself a Powysian by birth—Llanrhaiadr yn-Mochnant claiming the distinction of being his birth-place. Among the many churches built through the influence of Germanus in Mid-Wales—extending from St. Harmon's in Radnorshire to Llanarmon in Yale—was Castle Caereinion, a church situated within the municipal bounds of Welsh Pool, and dedicated under the title of *St. Garmon.*

It was during Germanus's sojourn in these parts that he met with that abnormally wicked character of early Welsh history, King VORTIGERN. The interview was at a place called *Guarthennian* (probably Worthen),[1] at a synod held there. It was upon this occasion that Germanus blessed Vortigern's three sons—Vortimer, Catigern (Cadeyrn) and Pasgen—and it was then that he uttered that remarkable prophecy, when young Vortimer fell upon his knees at the saint's feet, "You shall be sole king from this day, nor shall a king of your race ever be wanting." This prophecy of perpetual sovereignty to the royal house of Powys has been fulfilled in a remarkable manner; for, the lineal descendants of Vortimer's brother, Cadeyrn,[2] held the sovereignty of Powys, without break or interruption, until the first Edward's final conquest of Wales in 1282 brought about the downfall of their long tenure of the royal dignity; and even then the sovereignty was not finally wrested from this family, for, did not Henry Tudor claim his descent from Cadell of Teyrnllwg (Cadeyrn's great-great-grandson)? . . . . "And is not Queen Victoria, then, who reigns over Powys as well as other equally happy and loyal regions, a descendant

[1] Worthen is suggested as the site of Guarthennian by the Rev. W. V. Lloyd, M.A., F.R.G.S. (*Mont. Coll.*, vol. iv, p. 35.)

[2] Cadeyrn, or Cadell. Nennius, in his *History of the Britons*, mentions this prophecy, but confuses the earlier Cadell with his descendant, Cadell of Teyrnllwg.

of the Tudor kings, and is not, therefore, the prophecy of St. Germanus being still verified—"a king of your race shall never be wanting"?[1]

After the final departure of St. Germanus, the first wave of missionary enterprise that swept over Mid-Wales was the ARMORICAN MISSION. The noble band of men who formed this mission came to the spiritual rescue of their persecuted compatriots, who were being driven by the pagan invaders to the mountain fastnesses of Wales; and to them must be assigned the distinction of keeping together the Catholic faith and the Apostolic discipline of the native church, at a period of great peril to both church and people. Foremost amongst these Cymry of far-off Brittany were CADVAN and PADARN: the name of the former is locally perpetuated at his church at Llangadvan in Caereinion, and the latter in the ancient cathedral foundation of Llanbadarn Fawr—a portion of this now-extinct diocese being comprised within our present county.[2] Cadvan's companions included Tydecho, who founded Garthbeibio, Llanymowddy, Cemmaes and Mallwyd; Ervyl, who founded Llanervyl; Trinio, who founded Llandrinio: Cynon, who gave his name to Tregynon; and the brothers Ust and Dyvnig, to whom the church at Llanwrin (near Machynlleth) is dedicated.

It was due to the far-spreading influence of the HOUSE OF CUNEDDA that the Church in Wales became settled and organised in the manner that we see it to-day; and as many of our ancient parish churches date their foundation to saints of this family, we can accept with reasonableness the statement of the *Triads*, that Cunedda's family was "one of the three holy lineages of the Isle of Britain", and that of the Welsh MSS. which speak of the great *Gwledig* as "the first to bestow lands and privileges upon the churches of

[1] Rev. W. V. Lloyd's *Blessing of St. Germanus* (*M. C.*, vol. iv).

[2] There is a *Cwm Badarn* near Montgomery, upon the borders of Kerry parish, and adjoining Kerry is the parish of Llanbadarn Fynydd (Radnorshire).

Britain". Nennius states that Cunedda's sons came to Wales 146 years before the reign of MAELGWN of Gwynedd, the most powerful and illustrious prince of their house.[1] To this vicious but versatile King Maelgwn must be given the honour of founding the two bishoprics of North Wales — BANGOR (Bangor Deiniol) in 550, at the instance of St. Deiniol, and ST. ASAPH in 560, through the exertions of St. Kentigern. It may have been about this latter date that the far-famed college of Bangor Iscoed was founded by the Powysian King, Cyngen.

It was about this period (the middle of the sixth century) that we first hear of the planting of a mission at POOL (at that time probably being known by its earlier form of *Pwyl*). We are informed[2] that a grandson of Cunedda's grandson Meirion, CYNVELIN, came to this district and founded a church, at the period "between the accession of Cystennin Goronog[3] in 542 and the death of Maelgwn Gwynedd[4] in 566". This event must have taken place some forty or fifty years before the landing of ST. AUGUSTINE in Kent.

The arrival of Cynvelin in these parts is the first specific mention of Welsh Pool in history. Our town, therefore, like most other towns and villages in Wales, derives its origin from an ecclesiastical source. This fact opens out an interesting consideration which it will be worth our while to enter into for a short time.

Until the end of the twelfth century the Cymry were an essentially pastoral race; their main occupation in times of peace being the tending of their flocks and herds. The chief social and economic results of this pastoral life were a strong disinclination for *community* life, and an equally strong attachment to the *family* life: our ancestors being content to dwell

[1] Rhys' *Celtic Britain*, p. 117.
[2] Rees' *Welsh Saints*, p. 260.
[3] Constantine, King of West Wales (Cornwall and Devon).
[4] Maelgwn, "the Pendragon" (*Insularis Draco*) of Gwynedd, King of the Britons.

in scattered tenements along the edges of the woods, instead of grouping themselves together into village communities. This apparent disregard for village or town settlements has been accounted for from the fact that the exigencies of their pastoral life compelled the tribesmen to migrate with their herds to the higher ranges of the hills in the summer—when each family dwelt in its *havod* or summer-house; and to return to the valleys for the winter months, when the family took up its abode in the *tyddyn*, or homestead. The migratory habits of the people, then, produced a social state which was distinctly inimical to the growth and development of village or town life, and at the same time was the prime cause of all the political upheavals which so marked the history of Wales during the days of her independence. It may be asked, how did it come to pass that villages (and even towns) did spring up and, moreover, were able to flourish in Wales in ancient times? Before answering this question, it will be better, first of all, to cast a glance at the prime cause of the rise and development of village communities in England, and then we will proceed to add a further query, viz.: did the English and Welsh villages, each collectively, have one common origin?

In England the nucleus of village life was the *ham*, or homestead, of the landlord, around which was clustered the *tun* or township: the Saxon village or township being therefore a manor with a village community in villeinage upon it. The holdings of the villagers "were indivisible bundles passing with the homestead, which formed part of them, by re-grant from the lord from one generation of serfs to another in unbroken regularity, always to a single successor, whether the eldest or the youngest son, according to the custom of each individual manor".[1] It should be

[1] *Vide* Professor Seebohm's *English Village Community*: this book, together with its companion, *The Tribal System in Wales*, are perhaps the most valuable authorities of recent times upon the ancient social polity of England and Wales.

noted that these English villages have mostly derived their names from the family who originally held the manor or township.

In Wales, however, the growth of the village was quite extraneous to the social polity of the country. In nearly every case the ancient borough-towns and villages of Wales derive their origin from an ecclesiastical source: their nucleus being the "church" of the local hermit, saint or religious community; according to the circumstances of the case the "church" being either a *bangor*, *llan*, *eglwys*, *bettws*, *yspytty*, *capel* or *kil*. Accordingly, around the walls of the "church" in course of time gathered the dwellings of folk whose social proclivities, or else industrial occupations, had prompted them to congregate under the protecting walls of Mother Church, instead of dwelling in the open country-side after the manner of the tribesmen. Welsh Pool is a typical case of the above.

To return to St. Cynvelin and his church at Pool: it has been assumed that this church of St. Cynvelin (*Llan Gynvelin*) stood upon the site of the present church of St. Mary's; but there is no evidence adduced to support this assumption, beyond the fact that many religious houses of Wales founded during the middle period of Welsh history were built upon the sites of some earlier erections of the British Church. The word *llan* almost invariably[1] means "the precincts of a church", "a sacred enclosure", or "the church" itself; and so, in order to trace the position of Cynvelin's church, we must also trace the presence of a *llan* in the past and present place-names of the town and its vicinity: this at once is found at Welsh Pool in the name *Llangollen*, which up to a century ago was the designation of Berriew Street and the suburb extending in the direction of Montgomery. The township that includes this portion of our town is called Trallwm Gollen, and the relationship of this name to

[1] *Llan* has not an ecclesiastical significance when used as a suffix: as in *Corlan*, *Winllan* and *Perllan*.

Llangollen is so apparent that there can be no difficulty in assuming that *Trallwm Gollen* has been evolved from *Treflan Gollen*;[1] and this at once brings us to the question—who is Collen? This name, under the different forms of *Collen*, *Cyllin* and *Cyhelyn*, has been borne by many descendants of Cunedda; and so we come to the *crux:* is Collen (Cyhelyn) the same person as Cynvelin, and, therefore, is Llangollen (Berriew Street) the site of St. Cynvelin's Church (*Llangynvelin*, *Llangyhelyn*, *Llangollen*)? We are told in Rees' *Welsh Saints* that the churches of the Ancient Britons were built of wood and covered with reeds of straw: building churches of stone being contrary to the usual custom of the Britons before the beginning of the eighth century. Cynvelin's church, built doubtless of such perishable materials, has long since passed away; but we can well conjecture that it stood at Oldford suburb, upon the line of the Roman road (mentioned in Chap. II) leading from Mediolanum to Caersws.

Cynvelin, we learn, was a saint of Bangor Deiniol, the son of Bleiddud ab Meirion, and that in addition to the church at Pool he founded yet another—Llangynfelin, near the outflow of the Dovey into Cardigan Bay. His name is also perpetuated in the reef that runs out into the Bay at a point above Aberystwyth. He had a brother named Cynudyn, who was a rector, or *periglor*, of the collegiate church of St. Padarn (Llanbadarn Fawr).

Yet another of the Cunedda saints came to our parish during the sixth century. This was MARCHELL (Marcella), the daughter of Arwystli ab Owen Danwyn ab Einion Wledig, who founded a retreat or cell near the Severn, upon the spot where, in the twelfth century, Owen Cyveiliog erected his noble foundation, the Abbey of Strata Marcella. Marcella flourished

[1] The name of this township has sometimes been spelt *Trellan Gollen*, *Trallungolleyn*. *Treflan*, of course, means "church township", and is a very general name throughout Wales for the central township of a parish.

between the years 566-600. Her name survives in STRATA MARCELLA (*Ystrad Marchell*), and perhaps in *Varchoel*, the name of a township partly within the Borough of Pool.

In the great exodus of the Britons into Wales during the "Making of England", there must have been a fair number of ecclesiastics who made good their escape from the slaughtering hand of the Northman. Among these refugees, whose names have been handed down to us, was TEON (Theonus), the brave old Bishop of London, who refused to the very last to desert his see. His flock had already taken their flight to the West, or else had perished in the general ruin; but still he held on at the post of duty, until at last he found that his presence was no longer required: the city of London being by that time completely denuded of his fellow-Christians, and given over to the worshippers of Woden. The good bishop effected his escape from the paganized city and fled to the mountains of Wales. It was to the neighbourhood of our town that he is generally supposed to have come,[1] although this statement seems controverted by some Welsh MSS., which state that he fled into ARMORICA (Brittany). This seeming contradiction, however, is not so apparent when it is remembered that many early Welsh writers were wont to speak of Powys as *Llydaw* (Armorica);[2] and, to make the confusion worse, they would likewise use the same title for far-off Brittany; so we can therefore accept the statement that Teon fled to the Severn Valley with a certain amount of credence, especially when we take into consideration the fact that the bishop's grandson, LLEWELYN, gave his name to the town and parish of Pool for many centuries.

Towards the latter part of the sixth century, and some twenty years or so after the coming of Cynvelin to

[1] Mr. Rd. Williams' *Montgomeryshire Worthies.*

[2] Antiquitus pars maxima Walliæ dicta est Armorica"—*John of Teignmouth* (quoted by the late Mr. Askew Roberts in his *Death of St. Oswald*).

these parts, may be assigned as the date when Llewelyn, the grandson of Teon, founded his *bangor* or religious house here. This saint is described in the more reliable MSS. as "Llywelyn Sant o'r Trallwng ab Tegonwy ab Teon",[1] and he has been identified with the "Alarat, Prince of the Pwyl,[2] of the *Iolo MSS.* and the "Amalarus, Prince of the Pwyl" of the *Myvyrian Archæology.* Very little is known of the life of our saint, but this we know: that he founded a religious house at TRALLWNG in Powys (Welsh Pool), which has been reckoned by Ab Ithell as one of the twenty-five principal religious foundations of the old Celtic Church in Wales,[3] and that he ended his days at Bardsey, leaving a son, GWYDDVARCH, who, following in the footsteps of his father, "assumed religion", and founded a church at Meivod.

In the *Red Book of Hergest*[4] there is to be found a very curious religious dialogue in verse, composed by St. Tysilio, and entitled *The Colloquy of Llewelyn and Gwrnerth.* The poem (belonging to the *Mynydd Eira* class of Welsh verse) is of too great a length to quote *in extenso,* so we shall merely give the first verse, together with the preface and footnote attached to the poem:—

> "Mountain snow, wind about the bush;
> It is the Creator of Heaven that strengthens me.
> Can it be that Gwrnerth sleeps?"

"Llewelyn and Gwrnerth were two penitent saints at Trallwng in Powys, and it was their custom to meet together during the last three hours of the night and the first three hours of the morning to say their Mattins; and the Hours of the Day besides. And once upon a time, Llewelyn, seeing the cell of Gwrnerth closed, and not knowing why it was so, composed an Englyn."

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[1] In Rees' *Welsh Saints,* Llewelyn is erroneously described as a brother of Cynvelin.

[2] In the name *Y Pwyl* we have the earliest form of the modern *Pool* (*La Pole*).

[3] *Eccles. Antiquities of the Cymry,* p. 211.

[4] Skene, i, p. 590.

"Tysilio, the son of Brochwel Ysgythrog, composed these verses concerning Gwrnerth coming to perform his devotion with Llewelyn the Saint, his companion; and they are called The Colloquy of Llewelyn and Gwrnerth."

As already mentioned, from the days of Llewelyn until the close of the thirteenth century, Pool was known as Trallwng Llewelyn: this was to distinguish it from the adjacent Trallwng Gollen. The nucleus of Llewelyn's *parochia* seems to have been "THE PWYL" (which afterwards became subdivided into "Pool Town" and the "Welsh Town"), having for its neighbour Cynvelin's *parochia*, which adjoined it upon the south.

The site of St. Llewelyn's church has been definitely fixed at the corner of the "Clerk's Lane" and Salop Road, and about two hundred yards east of St. Mary's Church, and upon the spot formerly occupied by the old *Queen's Head.* This seems to be the site spoken of in the will of Howel ab Ieuan of Pool, August 27th, 1545, wherein mention is made of "hys lands lying in the Welshe Town: . . . . the field called Maes-tan-*Capell Sainte Lleu'n*"—which field is again mentioned in the will of Gilbert Jones of Pool, January 11th, 1616-7. The copy of the old engraving at the Powysland Museum, representing "The Old Church, Welshpool—This is the old church at Welshpool, near the Old Queen's Head, and built in 1587.[1] Destroyed by fire on Christmas-day, 1659"—and a tradition among some of the old inhabitants of the town that a church formerly stood here, can be mentioned as evidence in favour of the existence of a church upon this spot.[2]

The early town (Trallwng Llewelyn) sprung up

[1] Rather should we say 587—the very period when Llewelyn flourished? The Elizabethan was certainly not a church-building age; neither would it be necessary to build a church upon this spot, considering that in 1587 St. Mary's was standing.

[2] Since writing the above, the writer finds that the above excerpt from Howel ab Ieuan's will had not escaped the watchful eye of the late editor of *Montgomeryshire Collections* [*vide* vol. xxi, p. 339].

around Llewelyn's religious settlement centuries before the later town (La Pole, or Pool) was built upon the south side of the Lledan—following upon the building of the castle. Llwyd, in his *Topographical Notes*, p. 305, makes mention of the site of the old town :—

"Tradition says that the old town stood below the present church (St. Mary's) on the Salop road ; and this is generally believed, as several persons who, within these few years back, were employed in cutting the foundations of some new houses near the canal, found a

"THE OLD CHURCH, WELSH POOL."
(Demolished.)

great quantity of human bones, supposed to have been the burial-place, and a little lower down, on the left hand of the road, a regular pavement, similar to a street, was about the same time discovered."

After this digression upon *Capell Sainte Lleu'n* we must now return to the early missionaries.

About the latter end of the sixth century another church was erected within the bounds of the present borough: this was the church at Guilsfield[1] (*Maes*

[1] The Welsh name for Guilsfield is *Cegidfa*, *i.e.*, "the hemlock place". The scribes of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries treated this Welsh name as if it were *Cae Egidua*, *i.e.*, "Giles' field": hence the misnomer *Guilsfield*.

Kegitua yn Mhowys), founded by AELHAIARN, brother of St. Llwchaiarn,[1] and the son of that Prince Caranmael (Cynvael), who, with his brother Cynddylan, and the other sons of King Cyndrwyn, had perished whilst defending the city of Tren against the myrmidons of Wessex. St. Aelhaiarn's home was at Llystyn Wennan in Caereinion; and in Rees' *Welsh Saints* we are informed that he flourished between the years 566-600. The present parish church of Guilsfield is dedicated under the name of *St. Aelhaiarn.*

The greatest of all the local saints was undoubtedly BEUNO; but although the scenes of his greatest activity were in the north of Wales—at Holywell and Bangor Celynog—yet the fact that he was a Powysian by birth, and that much of his missionary zeal was expended in the Valley of the Severn, should not be forgotten.

Beuno belonged to the princely line of Cadell of Teyrnllwg. His father was Bugi, "a gentleman living in Powys, at a place called Banhenig,[2] near the Severn" (*Vita S. Winfrede*). Upon reaching manhood our saint went to Caergwent to be prepared for the priesthood. It was during his sojourn there that he was summoned back to attend the death-bed of his father; and upon returning to his native land he was well received by Maun, Lord of Cedewain, the son of the reigning Prince of Powys (Brochwel Ysgythrog), who "gave him Berriew, near Welshpool, for the sake of his own soul and the soul of his father":[3] the churches of Berriew and Bettws Cedewain remaining to this day to testify to Beuno's zeal as a churchman. A large monolith, standing near the outfall of the Luggy into the Severn, and still known as *Maen*

[1] Founder of Llanllwchaiarn and Llanmerewig.

[2] *Banhenig* seems to have been in the vicinity of Welsh Pool. Its probable allocation is to be found around about Cwm-yr-*henog* upon the Long Mountain.

[3] *Cambro-British Saints*, p. 301.

Beuno, is supposed to mark the spot where our saint was wont to preach the "Glad Tidings" in these parts.

After some years' sojourn in his father's country, Beuno removed northwards; and his reason for doing this seems to have arisen from this cause: that his sensitive spirit would not brook the presence of anyone belonging to the hated English race—for even at this early period (*circ.* 610) some pioneers of the Anglo-Saxon invasion had evidently penetrated into this corner of the west country. The tale is told that as Bueno was travelling one day by the Severn he heard the voice, on the other side of the river, of an Englishman, who was shouting in English to his hounds, who were coursing a hare. Beuno, who was about to cross the river, immediately came back, and said to his disciples, "My sons, put on your clothes and your shoes, and let us leave this place, for the nation of this man hath a strange language and is abominable: and I heard his voice, on the other side of the river, inciting the dogs after a hare; they have invaded this place, and it shall be theirs, and they will keep it in their possession."[1]

Some time after this incident, Beuno left the Severn Valley and came to Meivod, where he had an interview with another of Brochwel's sons, the illustrious St. Tysilio. Leaving Meivod, our saint crossed the Berwyns and came to the Dee Valley, where he tarried for a time, and when there received Gwyddelwern from Cynan Garwyn, the brother of Maun and Tysilio, at which place he founded a church. Again he moved northwards, and his famous doings at Holywell and Bangor Celynog gave him an enduring name in the annals of the British Church. His college at Celynog was founded under the patronage of Cadvan, King of the Britons, and was further endowed and supported

[1] Newell's *British Church*, p. 86; Green's *Making of England*, p. 197.

by this king's son and successor, Cadwallon. Further details of this saint's life will be found in Rees' *Welsh Saints*, and in the Rev. J. Fisher's biography of *Montgomeryshire Saints* (published by the Powys-land Club).[1]

Cynyw, who founded Llangynyw in Caereinion, was Beuno's uncle. He is said to have held the office of recorder (*cofedydd*) in St. Cadoc's college of Llancarvan. Llangynyw church lies six miles west of Pool; within the bounds of its parish is the site of the ancient palace of Mathraval.

This short chapter on local hagiology would not be complete without a passing reference to Gwyddvarch and Tysilio, two other local saints of considerable repute, but as their history belongs rather to the next chapter than to the present one, we will deal with them further on.

Maen Beuno, near Berriew.

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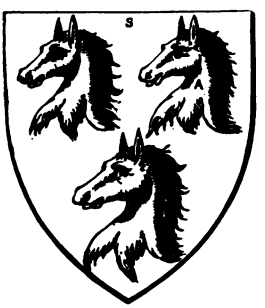
[1] *Mont. Coll.*, vol. xxv, p. 136.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TRIBE OF BROCHWEL.

CADELL of Teyrnllwg, the first historical Prince of Powys, was succeeded by his son CYNGEN (to whom reference is made in a previous chapter); and Cyngen's son and successor was BROCHWEL, surnamed *Ysgythrog* ("the Fanged"). On account of the stirring times that he lived in, this Prince's fame was not allowed to relapse into obscurity, which it was the fate of most of the Princes of his line to do; but even in Brochwel's case only a few fragments of his eventful life have been handed down to us: notably, the pretty legend of his meeting with Monacella in the wilds of Pennant Melangell, and the part he took in the great struggle between Celtic Christianity and Saxon heathendom, which culminated in the momentous *Battle of Chester* and the subsequent massacre at Bangor Iscoed.



BROCHWEL YSGYTHROG.
Sa., three nags' heads erased, *arg.*

It was in the year 613 that that great battle occurred which was to cut off the Cymry of Wales for ever from their compatriots in the north, and to bring Anglian dominion to the shores of the hitherto Celtic *Sea of Manaw* (Irish Sea).

ETHELFRED, the pagan King of Northumbria, bent upon the forcible disruption of the Cymric league, marched his Anglian army up the valley of the Trent, and crossing the plains of Teyrnllwg came right up to the walls of Chester, where the British forces were collected. As the rival armies advanced towards each other in savage fury, both Briton and Northman well knew that the fate of Britain lay trembling in the balance. The battle was fought; the Welsh King was

slain, and his men, becoming demoralised by the death of their leader and the overwhelming force of the enemy, retreated with severe losses; and Chester thus became the prey of the rapacious Northumbrian. The city was sacked and destroyed, and for three hundred years after the battle lay desolate and forsaken.

The commander of the reserve flank at the Battle of Chester was the Prince of Powys, and it was his duty to stay Ethelfred from penetrating southward along the Dee Valley, and to act as a shield and defence to the great college of Bangor Iscoed, his father's noble foundation. Before the battle had taken place, it so happened that Ethelfred had noticed some monks from Bangor praying for the success of the Welsh arms. The pagan King inquired who they were and what they were doing, and on being told said, "If, then, they cry unto their God against us, though of a truth they do not bear arms, yet they fight against us because they oppose us by their imprecations."[1] In the flush of victory Ethelfred did not forget the vengeance he bore to the brethren of Bangor for the part they took against him, so quickly following up the Powysian forces he gave them battle. Brochwel was defeated, but managed to make his escape; but dire consequences befell the holy men and youthful students of Bangor. They were (twelve hundred of them) massacred in cold blood, only fifty making their escape.[2] From that time forward the great seminary was to remain utterly effaced, never to rise again; but its memory will be for ever handed down in the annals of Britain because of the great and noble work it performed, and the influence it exercised, in those chaotic days of the sixth and seventh centuries.

The verdict of posterity has acquitted Brochwel of blame in the part he took in the defence of the twelve hundred martyrs of Bangor, and so we must give him credit for heroic action and skilful daring in this momentous crisis of his life; and who was there amongst

[1] Newell's *British Church*, p. 84. [2] Rhys' *Celtic Britain*, p. 124.

his contemporaries who could be more eminently fitted for this arduous task than Brochwel himself? For was he not the reigning Prince of the land wherein Bangor was situated; and was not his father the munificent founder of this abode of light and learning; and his wife, the saintly Arddun,[1] was she not sister of its great Abbot, Dunawd? We can safely affirm that the interests of both Prince and college were so completely identical that in the battle before the walls of Bangor the Prince of Powys was fully alive to the vital issues he was then contending for.

The calamity that befell Brochwel at the hands of Ethelfred in 613 seems to have been avenged in 617, according to Caradoc of Llancarvan. This chronicler makes mention of this latter event in the following words: "This man (Brochwel) with Cadvan, King of Brytaine; Morgan, King of Demetia; and Bledericus, King of Cornewal, gave an overthrow to Ethelfred, King of Northumbria, upon the river of Dee. *Anno gratiae* 617",—a statement which he amplifies with a quotation from the *Historia Divae Monocella*, thus: "Brochwel Yscithroc, Consul of Chester, who dwelt in a towne then called Pengwerne Powys, and now Shrewsburie (*Salopia*), whose dwelling-house was in the verie same place where the College of Sainte Chad now standeth."[2]

Ten years prior to the massacre of Bangor there was held at Awst, upon the shores of the lower Severn, that notable conference between St. Augustine, the first Bishop of the newly-formed English Church on the one side, and the Bishops of the native British Church on the other. The prelates in attendance were said to be the Bishops of Bangor, Hereford, Llanbadarn, Llandaff, Margam, Llanelwy (St. Asaph), and Worcester, with the Abbot of Bangor Iscoed, Dunawd, acting as

[1] Arddun, "the Wing-headed", daughter of Pabo, "the Pillar of Scotland". *Dolarddun*, an old manor-house, near Welsh Pool, is probably named after this Princess.

[2] Dr. Powel's *Historie of Cambria*, p. 22.

legate of the Archbishop of Menevia.[1] In addition to his legatine duties, Brochwel's politic brother-in-law likewise acted as spokesman for the native Bishops. The conference broke up amidst mutual recriminations: Augustine's assumption of primacy over the ancient churches of Britain was indignantly rejected; and the disappointed Bishop, thus baulked in his schemes of spiritual supremacy, hurled this threat at the assembled Welsh churchmen: "If you will not have peace from your brethren, you shall have war from your enemies; if you will not preach life to the Saxons, you shall receive death at their hands."[2] This sinister prophecy bore terrible fruit in the ghastly event that occurred upon the banks of Dee in that fateful year of 613.

Among Brochwel's many sons, the only three whose names are worthy of mention are Cynan, Dinogad, and Tysilio. Of CYNAN, "the Young Hart" (*Garwyn*), who succeeded his father in the princely dignities, very little is known, other than his reputation as a benefactor of the Church.

Of DINOGAD we learn that he followed the profession of arms, and took an active part in the strife between Briton and Angle in his grandfather Pabo's kingdom in the north. He fell in the disastrous *Cad-traeth* (Battle of the Strand), upon the shores of the Firth of Forth, in 634.

> "The coat of Dinogad was of various colours,
> And made of the speckled skins of young wolves."[3]
> Aneurin's *Gododin*, canto 87.

Of these three sons of Brochwel, the youngest is perhaps to us the most interesting character, chiefly because of his intimate connection with our neighbourhood. TYSILIO can be reckoned among the most saintly and brilliant men that advanced the history of

[1] At that time (603) St. David was living, and therefore must have been occupying the see of Menevia.

[2] *Life of St. Beuno.*

[3] Translation taken from Dean Spence's *City of the White Walls.*

Powys-land: and his learning, his piety, and his devotion to the duties of Church and State, have entitled him to a place among the most eminent of Welshmen. At an early age he entered the sacred priesthood, and became a disciple of that holy man of Meivod, Gwyddvarch, the son of our Welsh Pool saint, Llewelyn. It was Gwyddvarch who founded the first church at Meivod, and to his princely pupil, Tysilio, must be credited the foundation of its second church.[1] These were the days when the Powysian churches were in their glory, and none were more distinguished among these beacons of spiritual truth and light than the illustrious churches of Shrewsbury and Meivod:

> "The church of Llydaw with its influence wide;
> The church of Pengwern, chiefest in the land;
> The church of Powys, Paradise most fair.
>
> . . . .
>
> A choir resplendent scattering gifts around;
> Bright is her presence, bright her glory's seat;
> Her name is worshipped for her dignity,
> Fair Meivod, with her sanctuary fair."[2]
>
> Cynddelw's *Song to Tysilio.*

MEIVOD was at that time the summer abode (*mai-vod*) of the Princes of Powys, and in after-years became their place of sepulture; and for many centuries after Tysilio's days its *parochia* was coterminous with the archdeaconry of Powys. It still was pre-eminent amongst its neighbours at the time when CYNDDELW wrote (twelfth century) about its beloved rector, Caradoc:—

> "I love its Archdeacon, Caradoc,
> The pastor of the generous Powysians."[3]

Even so late as the fifteenth century, churches in the deaneries of Pool, Caereinion, Mechain, and the Gordowr were reckoned as *capellæ* of the mother church at Meivod.

[1] He was also the founder of Llandysilio and other churches.
[2] Trans. Mr. Howel W. Lloyd, M.A.
[3] Trans. Canon Wynne-Edwards, M.A.

A well-founded tradition asserts that Tysilio eventually became Bishop of St. Asaph. We can well imagine how, in those troublous days of the seventh century, the wise head and firm hand, and the ready pen of the good Bishop were being constantly used in the service of his Church and people; and how his kindly heart would be ever wont to open out to the cry of distress and the tale of woe at his palace gates.

> "A lord munificent is Cadell's heir,[1]
> In his cathedral chair he keeps not stint;
> A Prince with princes holding intercourse."[2]
>
> Cynddelw's *Song to Tysilio.*

A pertinent question may here be asked:—If Tysilio had never gone to St. Asaph, would that see have included in its limits the far-off valleys of the Severn and Vyrnwy?—Is it not altogether probable that if Tysilio had remained at Meivod during the latter part of his long and useful life, and had not gone northward, a bishopric of Powys would have sprung into existence, having for its mother church Tysilio's foundation at Meivod, and for its first Bishop the royal Saint himself?

We may here mention a Breton tradition about one of Brochwel's sons, Sulien by name, who, however, judging from the similarity of names,[3] seems to be one and the same person as Tysilio, under another guise. The following extract is taken from Lobineau's *Vies des Saintes de Bretaigne*, vol. i, p. 252.[4]

"Sulien, son of Brockmael, was Abbot of Meivod in Montgomery. Much to the annoyance of his father, he became in early life a disciple of the Abbot or hermit Guimarch, or Gwyddvarch, who lived at Meivod, on the hill called Gallt yr Ancr; he concealed him awhile from his father's anger on Enes Sulien in the Menai Straits. To avoid the importunities of Hagarma, the widow of his brother Jacob, he escaped to Brittany and became a recluse on the banks of the river Rance, near

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[1] Refers to his descent from Cadell of Teyrnllwg.
[2] Trans. Mr. Howel W. Lloyd, M.A.
[3] Sulien—Tysuliawn—Tysiliaw.
[4] *Irish Arch. Journal*, vol. vi, No. 54.

Aleth, whence he evangelised the natives, and entertained St. Samson, Bishop of Dôl. On the death of his sister-in-law, Hagarma, the monks of Meivod came over to Armorica to recall him to the government of his monastery: unwilling to return, he gave them for heir-looms his books of the Gospels and pastoral staff, to bring back to his native Cambria; soon after the departure of the monks of Meivod, he died of fever on the 8th of November, before the middle of the seventh century."

Undoubtedly Lobineau was referring to Tysilio (under the disguise of *Sulien*), for the Saint's commemoration day was November 8th (as above); but the difficulty we encounter is this—how can we reconcile the statement that Tysilio died in Brittany with the generally-credited tradition that he died Bishop of St. Asaph?

We have now to pass on to purely secular history, for, with the death of Tysilio and his contemporaries, the "Era of Saints" may be said to have drawn to a close. Upon the conversion of Edwin of Northumbria in 627, and of Penda of Mercia in 655, the great international struggle between Celt and Saxon ceased entirely to have any religious significance, and it was then that the Church of the Cymry discontinued her quota of saintly men and women, of martyrs, confessors, and recluses; and henceforward we have only to deal with the fratricidal quarrels, the faction feuds, the ever-constant aggression of Angle, Dane, and Norman, and the countless acts of treason and rapine which make up the annals of our country for the 700 years that follow the times of Brochwel Ysgythrog.

The history of the immediate descendants of Brochwel is involved in much obscurity. The times in which they lived were times of great disturbance. The kingdoms of the Anglo-Saxons were continually engaged in internecine conflicts; they were at intervals allayed the more effectually to make inroads into the adjacent territories of the Cymry. Meanwhile, the Danish rovers became the common scourge of both parties, and were unceasing in their attacks, unsparing in their devastations. No wonder that there was little opportunity

to chronicle events! And is it to be wondered at that the few chronicles already made were hopelessly lost or destroyed in the confusion and destruction of those rude times? Nennius, who lived in the ninth century, sums up the Powysian history of this period in these words:—"All the sons of Cadell of Teyrnllwg became kings, and by their offspring has the whole territory of Powys been governed unto this day."

One local event, however, of the period immediately following the days of Brochwel has been handed down to us in the writings of both Welsh and Saxon chroniclers: this was the important victory gained by the Britons under their king, the mighty CADWALLON, who, by election of the Cymry, was Sovereign Paramount of Britain, and who by his prowess and daring became the most powerful of the kings of Cunedda's line. This victory is known as the *Battle of Meigen*, and was fought and won in Powys-land, upon the western slopes of the Long Mountain, in the year 633. This battle does not appear to have been one single engagement, but a succession of them, extending over some undefined period of time, the theatre of war being in the upper valley of the Severn, and centreing around the wooden stockades of the beleaguered town of CAER MEIGEN.[1] Here, upon the heights of Cefn Digoll (the Long Mountain), the contending forces of Edwin, King of Northumbria, and Cadwallon, the British King, were holding each other in a death-grasp, and around the base of the hill the subsidiary actions of Gwytgun, Garthan and Camaun[2] were being fought out.

> "White are the hazel shoots on Digoll Hill;
> Pitiless falleth blow on blow—
> 'Tis a hero's part to hold his own."
>
> From the *Gorwynion*.

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[1] Query, could the site of Caer Meigen be "Caer Digoll"—the British camp upon the Long Mountain, popularly known as the *Beacon Ring?*

[2] Archdeacon Thomas suggests Whitton as the scene of *Gwytgun*.

Llywarch Hen speaks of this long and sanguinary contest :—

> "An encampment of Cadwallon the Renowned
> At the base of Digoll Mountain :
> Seven months, and seven fights daily."[1]

And the bard tells us how the northern hosts destroyed Meigen, and the tide of war ebbed and flowed—at one time Cadwallon gaining some important position from the enemy, at another Edwin enabled to pour his warriors into the broken defences of the British town :

> "Cadwallon encamped on the Severn,
> On the further side of Breiddin,[2]
> Whilst the Bernicians were burning Meigen."
> *Llywarch Hen.*

> "A battle against the lord of fame
> In the meadows of the Severn."—*Taliesin.*

and of the many heroes who fell upon the British side, whom the bard laments in his *Englynion y Beddau* :—

> "The graves of the Long Mountain
> (Multitudes well know it),
> The graves of Gwrien, Gwryd Engwaud,
> And Llwyddog, the son of Lliwelydd."

The far-reaching consequences of this conflict upon the Long Mountain cannot well be over-estimated, for the outcome of it all was the downfall of the Northumbrian king, Edwin (brother-in-law of Ethelfred), and the glorious but short-lived conquest of the whole of Northumbria by the redoubtable Cadwallon.

The *Triads* speak of *Meigen* as "one of the Three Discolourings of the Severn".[3]

Perhaps Worthen and Camlad (two other places at the base of Cefn Digoll) represent *Garthan* and *Camaun* respectively.

[1] Llywarch "the Old" must indeed have been old when he wrote these lines, if he was living at the time of the sack of Treu—57 years before *Meigen*.

[2] *Dygen* is the Welsh word used—an ancient name of these hills.

[3] Mentioned in Rhys' *Celtic Britain*, p. 129.

"Cadwallon when he went to the battle of Digoll and the host of the Cymry with him, and Edwin with the host of England upon the other side, and then was the Severn discoloured from its source unto its estuary."—*Myvyrian Archaiology*, p. 399.

Nennius, in his account of *Gueith Meiceren*, states that Edwin was killed in the fight.

"And there (at Meiceren) Edwin and his two sons were slain, Cadwallon being the conqueror."

This statement, however, is contradicted by the *Saxon Chronicle*, which states that Edwin was slain by the British king "in the plain called 'Haethfelth,'" a place identified with Hatfield in Yorkshire.

The heroes of *Meigen* were undoubtedly the "tall men" (warriors) of Powys, led by their intrepid young prince, SELYF "the Serpent"—the son of Dinogad and grandson of Brochwel.

"Canaon Selyf Seirff cadeu Meigen."
Breiniau Gwyr Powys.

And these Powysian warriors, by reason of the glorious results of this contest, gained by their arms, received those privileges and immunities at the hands of their prince, known as the *Breiniau Gwyr Powys* ("the Privileges of the Men of Powys"), which have been handed down to us in the writings of Cynddelw. These *Breiniau* of Selyf are fully described in the interesting article upon this subject from the pen of Archdeacon Thomas, entitled *Early Powys* (published in the *Montgomeryshire Collections*).[1]

"Men of Powys, a race renowned,
By a skilful contest of joyful results,
Fourteen Privileges, strenuously upheld
And respected, they gained at Meigen!"
Cynddelw.

Selyf, like his predecessors, held his court at Shrewsbury (it has been conjectured that the county which owns Shrewsbury as its capital derives its name from this prince: *Salopia*, "the land of Selyf"—but the

[1] *Mont. Coll.*, vol. xiii.

conjecture certainly is unsupported by any authority of weight), and the *Triads* speak of him as "one of the Three Grave Avengers of the Island of Britain": which distinction implies that he came to a violent end, and that his disembodied spirit must have, for ever after, haunted the paths and thwarted the best laid plans of his hapless murderers.

The "Serpent of Meigen" was succeeded by his son MAEL MYNGEN, and he in his turn by his son BELI; and now by this time we have reached the eighth century. Beli's son and heir was GWELIOC,[1] and it must have been at the latter end of this prince's reign that the dire calamity happened which befell the men of Powys, which we are now about to relate. This event was the final wresting of the woody plains of Argoed (Salop) from the Cymry, and the consequent loss of their capital, "the city of the alder-groves", fair Pengwern, with the Hall of Cynddylan, the fortified height of Careg Hydwyth,[2] and the palace of Brochwel —"where now standeth the College of St. Chad".[3] This national disaster occurred at a period not earlier than 765, while some writers have placed the date as late as 781; but evidence can be adduced to show that 765 is the more likely date.

The conqueror of Pengwern was the mighty OFFA of MERCIA, who held the other English kings in subjection, and whose fame as a wise ruler and a far-seeing statesman brought him a reputation that extended over the whole of Europe, and gained for him his chief friend and ally, Charlemagne, the Emperor. The bare mention in the Chronicles that Shrewsbury did at this time fall into the hands of the English, "in the summer-time", and that the Powysians were driven beyond the Breiddin, and that their princes afterwards established their court upon the banks of the Vyrnwy, near the spot which had served for centuries as the summer

[1] Sometimes spelt *Gwyloc*, *Gwynog*.
[2] The site is now occupied by Shrewsbury Castle.
[3] Caradoc of Llancarvan.

abode *(Mai-vod)* of Cadell's heirs; these are the scanty details that have reached us from the days of Offa, King of Mercia, and Gwelioc, the last Regulus of Pengwern Powys. Oh, the pity that no Llywarch Hen has transmitted to us, written in immortal verse, the actions and the sufferings of his compatriots at this the second downfall of Shrewsbury!

The sequence to this disaster was the erection of *Offa's Dyke*, named after the terrible Mercian monarch, and extending from near Mold in Flintshire to the mouth of the Severn in Gloucestershire—a monument to this day of Mercia's strength and Cambria's weakness and overthrow—and the planting of the conquered territory between the Severn and the Wye with Anglo-Saxon colonists: thus completing the final cutting off of the Cymry from the fertile plains of Lloegr.[1]

Green, in his *History of the English People* (vol. i, p. 69), has the following to say about the English conquest of Salop:—

"Pushing, after 779,[2] over the Severn, whose upper course had served till now as the frontier between Briton and Englishman, Offa drove the King of Powys from his capital, which changed its old name of Pengwern for the significant English title of the Town of the Scrub or Bush, Scrobsbyryg, or Shrewsbury. The border line he drew after his inroad is marked by a huge earthwork which runs from the mouth of the Wye to that of the Dee,[3] and is still called Offa's Dyke. A settlement of Englishmen on the land between this dyke and the Severn[4] served as a military frontier for the Mercian realm."

Parenthetically, it may here be noted that three years after the conquest of Salop, the British Church conformed to the rule of the Western Church in the

[1] Lloegr = England.

[2] This date is conjectural.

[3] There is a confusion here of the two Dykes of Watt and Offa.—Ed. *Mont. Coll.*

[4] Some pasture lands near Buttington are known as *Rhwng Clawdd a Hafren*, *i.e.*, "Betwixt the Dyke and Severn": these lands lie between Offa's Dyke and the river. In Howel ap Ieuan's will (1545) these lands are described as *Rouge y clauth a haveren.*

mode of keeping Easter, and in other ceremonial matters.[1]

With sorrowing hearts the princes of Powys took up their residence in *Dyffryn Meivod*—at MATHRAVAL[2]—near the confluence of two branches of the river Vyrnwy. Here they erected a castellated palace, which extended over an area of two acres; and here, in the halls of Mathraval, for a space of nearly four centuries, the rulers of the great midland province of the Cymry administered the affairs of state; whilst from its ramparts the knights and gentlemen *(Boneddigion)* of the province issued forth to take charge of the men of Powys in their never-ceasing warfare with their powerful English neighbours. And may we not picture how, in times of peace, around its walls was heard the echoing tones of the huntsman's horn, as the prince and his guests rode forth, bent upon the pleasures of the chase; and how at nightfall, on the return of the merry hunting party, the grey walls of the castle re-echoed with the voice of melody, as the assembled minstrels poured forth the pathetic songs of Cambria and the bards recounted in verse the valiant deeds of the "tall men" of the province?

> "None here restrain the genius of the bard,
> The land of Brochwel is his sheltering shade,
> His shield, his covering, his sure defence."[3]
>
> *Cynddelw.*

The first Prince of Powys to take up his residence at Mathraval was ELISEG—whose name is still perpetuated in the adjoining entrenchment of *Clawdd Eliseg.*[4] But a more solid fame than that of being sponsor to a local place-name was reserved for Eliseg. To him was erected the renowned Pillar in the Vale of the Cross, near Llangollen, Denbighshire—raised by his admiring descendant Prince Cyngen—to commemorate

[1] *Brut y Tywysogion*, p. 7.
[2] Mathraval, six miles "as the crow flies" from Welshpool.
[3] Trans. Mr. Howel W. Lloyd.
[4] Commonly spelt *Clawd Llesg.*

the winning back of much of the territory filched from our countrymen by the rapacious Offa. The inscription ran thus :—This is the Eliseg who recovered his inheritance of Powys from the English"; and concluded: "Conmarch engraved this inscription at the request of his king, Concenn (Cyngen). May the blessing of the Lord be upon Concenn and upon his whole family, and on the whole region of Powys." The exploit thus commemorated was the union of the Welsh forces under the Prince of Powys in the year 776, and the work of expulsion they accomplished by compelling the national enemy to retire beyond the Severn,[1] and bringing the Breiddin and Long Mountain, and other places on the borderland, once more within the Welsh zone; thus leaving Offa's Dyke "high and dry" some miles within the territories of Eliseg. It was not till 250 years after this date that English influence again began to assert itself along the western slopes of the Long Mountain and upon the eastern banks of the Severn.

Of Eliseg's two sons, Brochwel and Cyngen, the former carried the sceptre of Powys upon the death of his father. To distinguish him from his illustrious namesake and predecessor, we will style him BROCHWEL II. His brother Cyngen appears to have been one of the first victims of the Danish invasion of these islands.[2] He was the father of Aeddan and the grandfather of Brochwel III, the *de jure* Prince of Powys, about whose descendants we will deal further on. Brochwel II was succeeded by CADELL II, whose death, occurring in 808, is mentioned in the *Brut y Tywysogion*,[3] and his place was filled by the last reigning prince of the Tribe of Brochwel, the gentle and amiable CYNGEN II,—the same Cyngen whose filial piety and patriotic spirit had prompted him to erect the memorial which gave its name to the Vale of the Cross (*Valle Crucis*).

The times that Cyngen lived in required the presence of a leader of stern resolution and decisive action, and

[1] Llwyd's *History*, p. 17. [2] *Brut*, p. 13. [3] *Brut*, p. 9.

these qualities must have been wanting in this prince; who, distracted by the state of affairs following upon the ravaging of Powys by Kenulph and his Mercians in 820,[1] shortly afterwards abdicated his power and retired to Rome; and during his sojourn in the Eternal City, in 848,[2] he came to an untimely end, being smothered with pillows by his retainers whilst reposing in bed.[3] A voluntary exile at Rome, murdered whilst asleep by his dependants,—such was the sad end of the last prince of the Tribe of Brochwel!

Cyngen left no son to succeed him, so his sister NESTA "carried off the province from the males";[4] or rather, to be more accurate, it was Nesta's son, MERVYN I, who succeeded to the *Talaeth* of Powys from the males of the House of Brochwel.[5] This Mervyn was a great potentate, being sovereign of the whole of Wales, including the Isle of Man; and his acquisition of this power was by virtue of (1) his marriage with Essyllt, the heiress of CYNAN, King of GWYNEDD, the last monarch of Maelgwn's line; (2) the claim of his mother to Powys; (3) his succession to his father Uriad's throne in the Isle of Man; and (4) his conquests in South Wales. He thus became the most powerful monarch that ruled in Wales since the time of Cadwallon.

For the first time in history, the Regulus of Powys now enjoyed the dignity of over-king of the Cymry, the *Pendragonship*, which was the inherent privilege of the Princes of Gwynedd. With such a personage as Mervyn to deal with, was it at all likely that the younger branch of Eliseg's family could justify their rights to the ancient throne of Powys by an appeal to arms? That they were wise in their generation, and did no such thing, we may infer from the fact that no mention is made by the chroniclers of civil strife in Mid-Wales

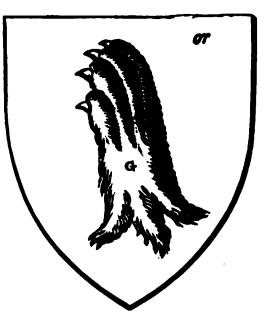
[1] Dr. Powel, p. 25.
[2] According to the *Brut* in 854.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 29.
[4] Lewis Dwnn, vol. i, p. 319.
[5] According to the *Breiniau Gwyr Powys*, it was unlawful for a woman to exercise rule over the Powysians.

under Mervyn's rule. The *de jure* princes[1] being powerless to enforce their rights, became mere feudal retainers of the MERVYNIAN and CYNVYNIAN princes, sinking into the comparatively humble position of lords of Guilsfield, Broniarth, and Deytheur.[2] From them are descended many of the best families of Montgomeryshire: notably the Myttons of Garth, the Blayneys of Gregynog, and the Lloyds of Marrington,—all of these families carrying the famous arms of Brochwel Ysgythrog, viz., *Sa., three nags' heads erased, arg.*

CHAPTER V.

THE HOUSE OF MERVYN.

The Princes of the House of Mervyn ruled over Powys, and other parts of Wales, from the ninth century onward, and (as already mentioned) they united in their persons the kingly line of Cunedda and the princely line of Brochwel; and their rule extended to 1062, when, so we read in the Welsh Chronicle,[3] "the brothers Bleddyn and Rhiwallon took the sovereignty of Powys from the Tribe of Brochwel Ysgythrog, which was contrary to right." The lives of these princes belong rather to the history of Wales in general than to our neighbourhood in particular, so we will pass them in review in rapid succession, staying only to consider any local event of such importance as to



RHODRI MAWR AB MERVYN.
Or, a lion's gamb.

[1] The *de jure* Prince, Brochwel III, has his name surviving in the township of *Llanerchrochwel* (*Llanerch Brochwel*), situated in the Borough of Pool. His father Aeddan's name is also perpetuated in *Bwlch Aeddan*, between Mathraval and Maesmawr.

[2] *Mont. Coll.*, vol. xxiii, p. 211.

[3] *Myvyr. Arch.*, ii, p. 506.

require our attention—such as the victories at Buttington (894) and Rhyd-y-Groes (1039). It must be owned that, during this long period of 240 years, history is particularly reticent in the matters belonging to our corner of the principality.

Mervyn I, King of all Wales, met his death at the *Battle of Cyveiliog*[1] in 844, and his son and heir, RODERICK THE GREAT (Rhodri Mawr), took into his possession the whole realm of Wales, and did many mighty acts, as his title of *Great* would imply.

Before his death in 877, Roderick, following the fatal custom of *gavel-kind*, divided his territories between his three sons: assigning Gwynedd (North Wales) to ANARAWD, with his court at Aberffraw; Deheu-barth (South Wales) to CADELL, with his court at Dynevor; and to his third son, MERVYN, he gave Powys, with Mathraval for his seat of government. By this unwise arrangement our beloved country, thus deprived of the benefit of one strong central government, soon became the scene of a long, wearisome intestine strife between the rival sceptres of the "triarchy", and thus became the ready prey of both Saxon and Dane.

Roderick, in bequeathing the third portion of his kingdom to his youngest son, Mervyn, defined the eastern borders of Powys as extending "from the river Dee to the bridge over the Severn at Gloucester"[2]—that the Prince of Powys ever enforced his claims to the wide lands of the lower Severn is more than doubtful.

Dr. Powel, in his *Historie of Cambria* (1584), deals with this tripartite division of Wales, and his account of the same may here be quoted:[3]—

"These three Dominions he (Roderick) appointed under their meares and bounds, with a princelie house in everie of them, which he

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[1] Cyveiliog, a commot of Montgomeryshire, containing Machynlleth and the adjoining parishes.

[2] *Llwyd*, p. 29.

[3] *Powel*, p. 36.

named *Y Tair Talaeth*, and left the same unto three of his sonnes, Anarawd, Cadelh and Mervyn, which were called *Y Tri Twysoc Talaethioc*, that is, The Three Crowned Princes, because everie of them did weare upon his bonet or helmet a coronet of gold, being a broade lace or head-band indented upward, set and wrought with precious stones, which in the Brytish or Welsh speach is called *Talaeth*. Aberffraw was the chiefe house of the prince of Gwyneth, whose dominion was therefore called *Talaeth Aberffraw:* Dinevowr the princelie house of Deheubarth, whereof that part is named *Talaeth Dinevowr;* and in like manner *Talaeth Mathraval* is so called of the princelie seat of Powys called Mathraval."

The Princes of Gwynedd by this arrangement were to exercise a suzerainty over the Princes of South Wales and Powys, and were to receive from them yearly a tribute called the *Madged*, which in the case of the Prince of Powys was commuted for a gift of four tons of flour. Bwlch y Pawl, a wild pass upon the Berwyn Mountains,[1] was appointed as the place of parley between the three provinces: in case of any difference arising between any two of them, the prince of the third province to act as the arbitrator, and thus save an appeal to arms, and so tend to the prevention of any fratricidal quarrelling. It would have been well for Wales if this excellent arrangement had been more often resorted to in the times that followed Roderic's death in 877.

The rule of Mervyn II over Powys-land was a troubled one, partly on account of the vexatious inroads of the Danes (who were now causing great trouble to the rulers and people of both England and Wales), but his troubles chiefly arose in connection with the unnatural conduct of his brother, Cadell of South Wales, who was jealous of the share that Mervyn received in the tripartite division, and who now took upon him to harass his unfortunate brother whenever the opportunity presented itself—in the end driving Mervyn into exile, and taking over to himself and his sons the whole of the fruitful lands of the Severn, Dee and Wye.

[1] Above Lake Vyrnwy.

It was in 890 that the Black Pagans (for so the Danes were called by the Welsh) swept up the valley of the Severn, bringing devastation and suffering in their train, and laying the whole country waste as they surged along. It was during this invasion that they established settlements at "Baldwyn's town" (Montgomery) and Buttington. It is not at all likely that Trallwng, with its churches and religious settlement, and its fortified burgh,[1] would have escaped the attention of these marauders; and, is it not probable that it was at this time that Cynvelin's church disappeared, never to rise again, its very site being long forgotten in the ages that were to roll by, and the local memory of the saint himself passing into oblivion, and his name becoming no longer of any significance to the local mind, and so fated to wear away by denudation of time, until *Collen* was evolved, and *Llangynvelin* became petrified into its shrunken form of *Llangollen?* Llewelyn's monastic foundation, also, would receive a drastic visitation from these rovers, who, according to their wont, would hasten to destroy the buildings after putting the inmates to the sword. The ruined monastery would never again be the peaceful abode of mediæval piety and monkish learning: although its attendant church would yet, for some centuries to come, continue to see the daily sacrifice offered within its walls. It will be well to remember that this description of a calamity that *probably* befell our town 1,000 years ago must be treated for what it is worth, being purely conjectural.

In 894 occurred the decisive *Battle of Buttington*, fought upon the eastern banks of the Severn, two miles below Trallwng:[2] an engagement which resulted in

[1] Anciently *Domen Gastell*—in feudal times called the *Mote of La Pole*—now the *Old Domen* at the Bowling Green.

[2] In treating upon this subject, the writer has tentatively accepted the generally-received tradition as to the allocation of this battle, viz., that the Buttington of the Saxon Chronicle is identically the same place as our modern Buttington.

freeing southern Britain from Danish rapacity for nearly a generation.

The leader of these freebooters at this time was the terrible HASTINGS, the scourge of France and terror of Italy; who had lately landed in England, bent upon the twofold object of expelling the Anglo-Saxons from the land (treating them in the like manner they themselves had treated the Britons), and establishing for himself a Danish empire in our islands. Upon landing, he was joined by the Danish settlers of East Anglia and Northumbria, and at Shoeburyness he erected a large fortress—from whence he intended to conduct operations in his intended conquest of England. Taking advantage of ALFRED'S absence in the west country, Hastings marched across the whole breadth of England, carrying all before him; but arriving upon the Welsh border-land he found that upon crossing the sacred waters of the Severn he had entered the territories of a strange race—a people altogether unlike the Saxons, whom he had come to conquer—it was then that he discovered that the Red Dragon of the Cymry had joined issue with the White Dragon of Wessex, and hastening on to Buttington—that outpost of Danish settlement, where his compatriots were awaiting his advent with the greatest concern—he found that the allied Celts and Saxons were already upon the point of investing the fortress of Buttington, and that there was no alternative but to try conclusions, then and there, with the power of England and of its ally, "Gallant Little Wales".

From every town and fortified place in Wessex and its dependencies[1] came the Saxon forces, led by Alfred's minister, the gallant Ordhelm, and Ethered of Mercia. They were followed by King Alfred himself, who came in his vessels of light draught up the Severn, each ship being manned with tried men and true. Upon the Trallwng side of the river were drawn up the "tall men" of Powys, under the command of their prince,

[1] *Saxon Chronicle.*

Mervyn,[1] ready even to assist their hereditary enemies, if by so doing they could free the valleys of Cambria from the accursed presence of the devastating Northmen. Well might it be said that upon that eventful day in 894 the whole chivalry of England and Wales were present at Buttington, to decide the supremacy of Alfred or of Hastings!

The battle was long and fierce, and the slaughter was great upon both sides. Brave Ordhelm and many thanes fell on the Saxon side; but the fight at length went against Hastings; and steadily, then irresistibly, the Danish phalanx was swept back, and many thousands were slain in the terrible retreat that followed.[2] The victory for Alfred and Mervyn became complete, while Hastings made good his escape with the remnant of his men. After a few more marauding expeditions to different parts of England, the Danish general, with his reputation shattered and his power broken at the death-struggle of Buttington, left these shores, never more again to return and trouble them.

The part that Mervyn took in the overthrow of the Danes in 894 was avenged by their fellow-countrymen in 903, when he fell by their hands at Meilon, in Anglesey, leaving an infant granddaughter to succeed him. Mervyn's death was sufficient to establish his brother Cadell's claim to Powys upon a more secure basis; and he was thus enabled to enjoy an undisputed rule over the province for some six years. Dying in 909, Cadell left his young son Howel in possession of the joint throne of Dynevor and Mathraval.

Howel Dda ("Howel the Good"—for so this Welsh Justinian was styled) ruled over the southern and central portions of Wales for some thirty years, and during that period his government had been so discreetly and justly conducted that, when Idwal ab Anarawd, Prince of Gwynedd, was killed by the Danes in 913, the men of North Wales by acclamation hailed

[1] *Morgan Owen*, p. 46.

[2] Green's *History of the English People*, vol. i, p. 81.

Howel as their prince; and so once more the whole of Wales became united under one head.

Never was happier choice made of a ruler than in the election of Howel to the Pendragonship. His versatile gifts, his love of law, justice and order, his benevolence, and, above all, the wholesome code of laws he drew up for his beloved country, have made for this prince a name foremost among many of the wise rulers of Britain, and a reputation for state-craft far exceeding any prince that has ruled in Wales before or after his time.

At the time that the *talaeth* of Gwynedd fell into his hands, Howel Dda united his son OWEN in marriage with ANGHARAD, the heiress of Powys (grand-daughter of Mervyn), and so performed a graceful act of reparation by giving her a joint interest with her husband in the government of the province. Upon Howel's death in 948, the brothers Ieuaf and Iago I (who represented Anarawd's line) took possession of North Wales, without any show of opposition from Owen—this personage seeming quite content with his patrimony in Powys and South Wales: the former portion of which he shared with his wife, the latter with his brothers. The insatiable ambition of the royal brothers of Gwynedd prompted them to further try their fortunes against the sons of Howel Dda. The *Battle of Carno*[2] was the outcome of their invasion of Powys, which resulted in Owen's overthrow; and so the rule of that rather feeble prince at Mathraval came to an abrupt termination.

After Owen's discomfiture and flight at Carno, Powys seems to have been made over by the victorious Ieuaf

[1] Angharad's father, Llewelyn, died some years prior to Mervyn's death in 903.

[2] Montgomeryshire has been aptly described as the "Battlefield of Wales"—no less than nine decisive contests having been fought within its borders: Battles of (1) *The Breiddin*, 51; (2) *Meigen*, 634; (3) *Cyveiliog*, 844; (4) *Buttington*, 894; (5) *Carno*, 949; (6) *Rhyd-y-Groes*, 1039; (7) *Mechain*, 1068: (8) *Carno*, 1079; (9) *Cefn Digoll*, 1295.

and Iago to a nobleman of South Wales, GWAITHVOED, whom the Welsh genealogists describe as "King of Powys", although it is questionable whether he ever assumed the royal *talaeth*—especially considering that the *Triads* describe him as "one of the three *Band-Wearing* Princes,[1] which means to say that he wore a circlet instead of a crown (*talaeth*) as his insignia of power. But whatever may have been the precise dignity of this regulus of Powys, his bold answer to the powerful and arrogant Edgar, King of England, gave him a title to kingly dignity which the heralds, seemingly, were not slow to acknowledge. Unlike the craven conduct of Ieuaf's son and successor HOWEL II, Prince of Gwynedd, and of the other tributary kings of Britain, when summoned by Edgar to row him upon the Dee at Chester, doughty old Gwaithvoed contemptuously refused the degrading proposal. His reply was: "I cannot row a barge, and if I could I would not do so, except to save a life, whether king's or vassal's." Not content with this well-merited snub, Edgar despatched a second message to Gwaithvoed, but the quick answer to this second demand showed that the daring Powysian was prepared to meet death rather than deign to bend the knee to the vain monarch of England. "Say to him", said Gwaithvoed, "Fear him who fears not death" (*Ofner na ofno angau*).[2] No more messages arrived from Edgar after this significant reply. This incident happened in 962.

Once more we find the family of Howel Dda taking possession of Powys and South Wales, and this was done in the person of MEREDITH, the son of Owen and Angharad. This Meredith was not only a bad ruler, but he was also a weak one; but he could not be considered worse than his contemporaries in Gwynedd—Howel II and Cadwallon—to such a parlous condition

[1] The other two were Elystan, Prince of Fferlys, and Morgan Hen, Prince of Glamorgan (*vide* Llwyd, p. 49).

[2] *Iolo MSS.*

was Wales at that time reduced for want of a firm, intrepid leader. In 987, Meredith, having managed to defeat and slay Cadwallon in an unimportant skirmish, seized the reins of government of the whole principality. But such a prize was far too great for his weak hands to grasp for very long, so, when the rightful heir of Gwynedd, IDWAL II, arose and laid claim to his ancestor Anarawd's throne, Meredith meekly retired from the North and came back to his patrimony in Powys and South Wales; and died in the year 1000 (so we are told) "of grief and vexation because he was not able to repel the insolencies of the Danes".[1] He left a young daughter, and she became ANGHARAD II, Queen of Powys and South Wales.

Our neighbourhood was disturbed in 1010 by one of those many desultory civil broils, which were from time to time cropping up, and doing more for the downfall of Cambrian independence than all the outside attacks of Saxon, Dane and Norman.

> "The shame and guilt of that unhappy strife:
> Briton with Briton in that unnatural war."—*Southey.*

This affair was the action upon the Long Mountain which resulted in the death of ELYSTAN (surnamed "the Renowned" by the heralds),[2] Prince of Fferlys,[3] the founder of the "Fifth Royal Tribe of Wales". Elystan is supposed to have been buried at the little church of Trelystan (Tref Elystan),[4] close to the spot where he fell.

Angharad, the young heiress of Powys, had married a mere boy shortly before her father's death, her husband being LLEWELYN, the son of Seissyllt, Lord of Buallt (Builth). This youthful couple shared together the united throne of Powys and South Wales, and this arrangement continued until 1015, when Llewelyn, having reached a more advanced age, took upon himself

[1] Llwyd's *History of Wales*, p. 58.
[2] Lewis Dwnn, vol. ii, p. 313. [3] Fferlys = Radnorshire.
[4] Formerly called *Woolston Mynd*, i.e., "Elystan's Mynd"—a name more properly applicable to the hill than to the church.

the task of overthrowing that froward usurper, AEDDAN, who had been unlawfully occupying the North Wales throne for some years past (following upon the unexpected death of Idwal II in 997). Having accomplished this design, Llewelyn took over the government of the whole principality, and very soon endeared himself to his subjects by his love of peace and justice: not that his short reign over all Wales was by any means a peaceful one, for the ever-recurring dynastic difficulties that beset our beloved country were yet unsolved; while the old sores were left unhealed; and the sundry members of the House of Mervyn continued in their predatory conduct towards one another, and in their unpatriotic attitude to the Cymric fatherland. Llewelyn gallantly met his death at the siege of Caermarthen in 1021, and the whole land fell to mourning such a spirited leader and wise administrator.[1] His widowed queen, upon his death, was forced to retire from the court of Aberffraw upon the arrival of young IAGO II[2] upon the scene. She retired to her palace of Mathraval, and there reigned for many years as Queen of Powys; marrying again in 1023, this time to CYNVYN, Lord of Cibwyr,[3] a nobleman who was destined to give his name to the next line of Powysian princes, but about whose career we know very little, although the heralds are good enough to inform us that he was a grandson of the redoubtable Gwaithvoed.

During the twenty years that CANUTE the Dane occupied the English throne (1016-1035) there was a cessation of hostilities between Celt and Teuton; but under his successors the struggle upon the borders started afresh, our countrymen in most cases being the aggressors; in fact, it may be said that in all the momentous political events happening in England during the

[1] Llewelyn, independently of his wife, had to a certain degree a right to the Principality, for his mother was a granddaughter of Anarawd.

[2] Son of Idwal II, who had died in 997.

[3] Kibbor (in Glamorganshire).

last thirty years of Saxon and Danish supremacy, the Welsh took an active and a leading part.

The strong man required for Wales at this critical period came forward at the opportune moment. GRIFFITH, the youthful son of Angharad of Powys and the Pendragon Llewelyn, by his own personal pluck and masterfulness won over to his side all the great men amongst the Cymry. Having dispossessed the reigning prince, Iago, he was received with loud acclamations by the men of North Wales as their prince. His mother, Angharad, being dead, Griffith now took over his lawful patrimony in Mid-Wales; and as his weak and amiable stepfather, Cynvyn, had made no previous efforts to assume the government of Powys, he had no difficulty in this direction. Following up this pacification of the northern states of Wales, Griffith now made a dashing reconnaisance into South Wales, and very soon brought both princes and people of that province to acknowledge his suzerainty.

Griffith's ambition was as boundless as his energy, and so, taking advantage of the internal feuds of Saxons and Danes, consequent upon the death of Hardicanute, he collected his forces together, bent upon acquiring the long-lost lands lying between the Severn, the Teme, and the Wye. But the news of his impending descent upon English territories soon became bruited abroad, so that Edwin of Mercia hastened to the Marches of Wales, in order to meet the Welsh king and give him battle before he had opportunity of penetrating very far over the English border. Edwin[1] advanced with his army to Chirbury—that *burgh* of the "Lady of the Mercians" which represented the outpost of Anglo-Saxon influence in the West.[2] With light-hearted daring, the Mercian leader issued forth from Chirbury, and crossing Offa's Dyke came to the banks of the

[1] Brother of Leofric, the husband of Godiva, of Coventry fame.

[2] Chirbury remains up to the present time the last *bury* (*burgh*) in the West. Once it is passed, Anglo-Saxon nomenclature disappears from the map, and a purely Celtic district is reached.

Severn, at that point where the waters of the rippling Rhiw and the sluggish Camlad mingle themselves with those of the sacred *Hafren*. Immediately upon reaching the eastern banks of the river, the men of Mercia found themselves confronted by the whole array of the Welsh forces, led by the dauntless Griffith. Edwin had no choice in his mode of action: a retreat to Chirbury for the purpose of rallying his forces was now an impossibility, for Griffith had already crossed the river, and by a flank movement had wedged the Mercians between the Severn and himself. There was but one course of action open, and that was—by dint of arms to force a passage through the Welsh ranks. Griffith had now commenced to pour his men into the Saxon lines, and the struggle now began. Then was fought that bloody engagement, the *Battle of Rhyd-y-Groes*.[1] Edwin and his thanes fought hard and fought well, but their men soon were beyond their control, the superior numbers of the Welsh army, and the extraordinary activity of the Welsh king, both combining to negative the generalship of Edwin. . . . . And so the day was won for Griffith; Edwin and his two generals, Thurkill and Elfgeat, were slain,[2] and the Saxon army of invasion was well-nigh annihilated. The turbid waters of Severn, as they rolled down to Trallwng, took with them the mangled bodies of those slain in battle; together with the bodies of those who, escaping from the slaughter, had ignominiously perished in the waters of the swollen river.

This decisive victory for Griffith had the effect of turning his attention from any delusive plans of territorial aggrandisement to the more practical ideas of consolidating his power at home, and the bringing about of many wholesome reforms in the administration of his kingdom. For the nine years following upon *Rhyd-y-Groes* he was busy with internal affairs, chiefly of a pacificatory character; whilst across the border the

[1] "The Ford of the Cross": the modern Rhyd-y-Groes, is two miles further up the Camlad Valley. [2] *Saxon Chronicle.*

Saxon rulers of England were too busily engaged in preparing their own downfall to trouble themselves very much with any aggressive business along the borderlands of Wales.

It was in 1048 that hostilities between the rival nations again broke out. The aggressor was Griffith, who had, with his usual diplomacy, succeeded in estranging the English king (Edward the Confessor) and Earl Godwin: thus cleverly avoiding an issue with the united front of Saxondom. The Welsh king gained a series of brilliant successes during the long struggle that ensued, notably at *Leominster* in 1052, and at *Westbury* in the succeeding year. In 1055 the city of Hereford fell into his hands, after an obstinate siege, and this latter success was followed up by an armistice being concluded between Griffith and his ally Algar, Earl of Mercia,[1] on the one side, and Harold, the English viceroy, on the other. To follow on with further details of the Pendragon's career would be taking our history too far afield, so it will suffice to mention that Griffith came to an untimely end during Harold's invasion and subjugation of Wales in 1061—perishing at the hands of a renegade Welshman. Thus fell "the head and shield and defender of the Britons,"[2] the fearless and true-hearted son of Llewelyn and Angharad of Powys!

With Griffith's death came about the termination of the rule of the House of Mervyn in the Mid-Wales province, and five years following this event came the advent of the NORMAN ERA in England, and, consequently, the final overthrow of Saxondom.

[1] Griffith married Algar's daughter, Editha. She is supposed to have married afterwards Harold, the English king.

[2] *Brut*, p. 45.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HOUSE OF CYNVYN.

In the year 1062 the English king appointed BLEDDYN and RHIWALLON, the sons of Cynvyn and Angharad of Powys, to the joint rule of Gwynedd and Powys, and Meredith ab Owen (of the line of Howel Dda) he nominated to the vacant *talaeth* of South Wales—these three princes having previously sworn allegiance to the crown of England. This act of theirs seems virtually to have settled, once and for all, the question of England's predominance, so far as Wales and her rulers were concerned. Henceforward we must look upon the Princes of Powys as feudatories of the English crown, although, be it remembered, they were still willing to acknowledge the *primus inter pares* rank of the *talaeth* of Gwynedd: in other words, the Cynvynian princes (from the days of Bleddyn[1] onward) owned a double allegiance. It was by reason of this peculiar arrangement that the rulers of Powys were enabled to pit the English monarch against the Welsh Pendragon, just as the exigencies of the moment prompted them how to act: a policy of "playing fast-and-loose" which has tarnished the reputation of the otherwise enlightened and masterful rulers who held sway over the central province of Wales, from the days of Bleddyn until the close of the thirteenth century.

The brothers Bleddyn and Rhiwallon had scarcely settled down to their newly-acquired duties and privileges before the civilised world was startled by the sudden seizure of England by the Normans under WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR, after that most decisive of conflicts, the *Battle of Hastings*, fought on October the 14th, 1066. Our Welsh princes now found them-

[1] Bleddyn ab Cynvyn was the last Regulus of Powys who was also Sovereign Prince of Wales.

selves face to face with a new and formidable foe, who, by the outcome of one single engagement, had shattered Anglo-Saxondom, and who would, when occasion should arise, crush out all sparks of nationality amongst the Cymry, without any delay, and with comparative ease. Two years after *Hastings*, in 1068, the sons of Cynvyn were troubled with a family broil which assumed alarming proportions: this was consequent upon the arrival in Wales of their late half-brother's sons—Meredith and Ithel—who had for their mission the winning back of Gwynedd from their uncles' hands. After being allowed to penetrate some way into the interior, the young sons of Griffith were met by Bleddyn and Rhiwallon at a place near Llanfyllin. The sons of Cynvyn brought with them a large force of Saxons—for since the Norman Conquest Saxon refugees had been pouring into Wales in vast numbers, seeking protection from the Princes of this land—and the sons of Griffith had with them many veteran warriors who once had fought under the banner of their peerless father—at Rhyd-y-Groes, at Westbury, at Leominster, and before the walls of Hereford. The two armies met face to face in the Commote of Mechain; and then was fought the *Battle of Mechain.*[1] The Cynvynians won the fight—but at the expense of Rhiwallon's life: and upon the other side, in addition to their discomfiture, Ithel was slain; and Meredith, making his escape, perished shortly afterwards from cold and hunger amidst the mountain wastes of the Berwyns. After this event Bleddyn exercised undisputed sway over Gwynedd and Powys for a period of about four years; but, in the year 1072, came to his death at the hands of the men of Ystrad Towy and Brecknock, into whose lands he had gone upon a punitive expedition.

Bleddyn was a wise and enlightened ruler. It was

[1] Mechain, a Commot of Montgomeryshire, containing Llanfyllin and the surrounding parishes. The Battle of Mechain is described in Freeman's *Norman Conquest*, vol. iv, p. 183.

he who undertook the reform of bardism and of minstrelsy. Among the enactments he issued was one declaring that no person should follow the profession of bard or minstrel but such only as were admitted by the Eisteddfod, which was then held once in three years.[1] He also took a keen interest in the collection of the national archives, emblazoning of arms and pedigrees, and in other literary works.[2] His name is a favourite one with the heralds, for the reason that he was the founder of the third "Royal Tribe of Wales", his arms being the well-known ensign of Powys, and of the present County of Montgomery, known as *The Ruddy Lion Ramping in Gold.*

BLEDDYN AB CYNVYN.

"The Ruddy Lion Ramping in Gold."

Bleddyn contributed his share to the castle-building age he lived in by erecting Dolvorwyn Castle in the land of Cedewain.[3] In Llwyd's *History of Wales* we are given an insight into this prince's wealth and liberality: the writer states that "he was very liberal and munificent, being indeed very able, having a prodigious and almost incredible estate, as appears by these verses made upon it:—

> "*Bleddyn ap Cynvyn bob cwys*
> *Ei hun bioedd Hen Bowys.*"[4]

After Bleddyn's death Gwynedd was seized by the usurper TRAHAERN ab Caradoc; whilst Powys fell into the hands of CYNWRIC ab Rhiwallon, who, however, only held it for a short time—for he was slain in 1074 by GRIFFITH AB CYNAN (the rightful heir of the House of Mervyn). Griffith next turned his attention

[1] *Lewis Morris MSS.* (quoted by Yorke).

[2] Yorke's *Royal Tribes of Wales*, p. 1.

[3] Cedewain extends from the Luggy Bridge to a point beyond Aberhafesp. Newtown is within this Cantref.

[4] *Llwyd*, p. 86.

to Trahaern and attacked him, and the contest between the two pretenders continued for five years without much result, until in 1079, at the second *Battle of Carno*, Griffith was enabled, with the assistance of his powerful ally, Rhys ab Tudor,[1] Prince of South Wales, to overcome Trahaern and slay him. Griffith ab Cynan thus became Prince of Gwynedd.

Bleddyn, Prince of Powys, had six sons: the eldest being Meredith, who eventually succeeded to the throne; although before he was enabled to do this he had to stand aside for a time, in order to allow his gallant and accomplished brother CADOGAN to enjoy the supreme rule in Powys during the latter's lifetime.

Of this Prince Cadogan, we read that he had in him all the making of a clever statesman and a brave soldier. He showed his skill and ability as a general by defeating the Normans in South Wales in 1094, and, soon after, another large body of them who had invaded Gwynedd. Having married Princess Gwenllian, daughter of Griffith ap Cynan, he became the firm ally of the Prince of Gwynedd; and these two princes joining their forces together in 1094 sacked the cities of Hereford, Shrewsbury, and Worcester. Gwenllian soon afterwards dying, Cadogan married again—this time taking to wife a daughter of Pigot de Say, who brought to him large estates in South Wales. In 1095 Cadogan was again engaged in aggressive work against his Norman foes: this time it was in his own land of Powys,[2] and the rock-enthroned fortress of Montgomery succumbed to the fierceness of his assault, the garrison was put to the sword, and the castle walls razed to the ground.

We must now pass on to the later portion of this prince's career. It was on Christmas Day in 1107 that

[1] Griffith ab Cynan and Rhys ab Tudor were respectively the founders of the first and second Royal Tribes of Wales. Rhys is supposed to have been the last Welsh prince to bear the kingly dignity.

[2] Green's *Short Hist. Eng. People*, p. 164.

he gave a great feast at his castle in South Wales, in honour of his young warrior son, Owen, to whom he was deeply attached; and to this magnificent banquet he invited the noblemen and country gentlemen out of every province in Wales. And for the sake of showing the greater respect for the guests, he invited to it the bards and the best minstrels, vocal and instrumental, that could be found in all Wales, and he gave them chairs and subjects of competition, "according to the custom of the feasts of King Arthur." This feast, however, led to an atrocious crime, which proved well-nigh disastrous to Cadogan. Among the guests was Nesta, daughter of the last Prince of South Wales, and wife of Gerald de Windsor, the King's steward of Pembroke Castle, whose beauty was "praised above all the women in the land", and whose charms inspired an ungovernable passion in the breast of Owen, Cadogan's son. Owen, after the feast, followed her home to Pembroke Castle, which he attacked and set fire to—Gerald escaping with difficulty—and he carried Nesta and her children captive away to Powys. The Steward of Pembroke being in high favour with HENRY I, that monarch bribed Cadogan's own nephews, Ithel and Madoc, to avenge this dishonour[1] by attacking his territories, thus making Cadogan the innocent victim of his son's misdeeds. The assaulting party were so strong that Cadogan and Owen had to make a precipitate flight. They embarked on a merchant vessel at Aberdovey,[2] and passed over to Ireland. Cadogan, however, returned the following year, and having offered satisfactory proofs of his innocence to King Henry, the latter permitted him to recover his estates in South Wales on payment of one hundred pounds penalty, and undertaking not to permit the return of his son Owen.

Most of Cadogan's latter days were spent in coping

[1] Mr. Rd. Williams, in his *Montgomeryshire Worthies*, gives a full account of Cadogan's Christmas feast.

[2] *Welsh Chronicle*, p. 89.

with the misdeeds of his sons and nephews—a most unruly race. It seems probable that it was for the purpose of keeping his nephew Madoc in check that he took up his residence at Trallwng in 1109.[1] In that year the prince's own brother, Iorwerth, had been diabolically put to death by the reckless Madoc, and his house given over to the flames. This tragedy was enacted at Caereinion, where Iorwerth was resident; and to the neighbourhood of Caereinion Cadogan now came. The *Brut y Tywysogion* describes the coming of this gallant prince to Welsh Pool in these words: "And Cadogan, without intending to injure anyone, as was his disposition, came to Trallwng Llewelyn, with the design of staying there, and dwelling where it was convenient, and near also to Madoc."[2] From the above we can infer that two reasons prompted Cadogan to select Welshpool as his seat of government, viz., because it was a convenient centre, and because it commanded the eastern approaches to Caereinion, where the outlaw Madoc lay entrenched. The prince now began to build his castle at Trallwng, and this event is recorded in the writings of Caradoc of Llancarvan as follows: "Therefore after that Cadogan had brought his country to some state of quietness, and saw right and justice ministered therein, he came to Trallwng (now called the Poole), and the elders of the country with him, and minding to dwell there, began to build a castle."[3] This is the first mention in history of POWYS CASTLE, in those days known as *Castell Coch yn Mhowys* ("the Red Castle in Powys"),[4] and the date of its erection may be affixed to the year 1109. Meanwhile, the implacable Madoc was plotting the downfall of his renowned uncle, and so, in 1110, occurred the tragedy within the newly-erected walls of the castle at Trall-

[1] *Welsh Chronicle*, p. 108.
[2] *Brut y Tywysogion*, p. 108.
[3] Dr. Powel, p. 171.
[4] *Castell Coch* is a term still applied to the castle of Pool by Welsh-speaking people.

wng, the account of which is given in the *Brut*, as below:—[1]

"Madoc sent spies to learn where Cadogan might be found, and they returned and said that the person they were in search of was far and near. And he and his men immediately came upon Cadogan, and Cadogan not imagining any mischief, conducted himself weakly, and would not flee, and without being able to fight (all his men having fled), he being found alone was put to death."

The assassination of the "Renowned Briton" (for so Camden styles him) was nothing less than a national calamity; and to Welsh Pool it was indeed a day of woe when its munificent lord and patron was laid low by the hidden knife of the assassin. Truly a tragic opening scene in the history of Cadogan's castle, with its walls remaining desolate and unfinished, eloquent witnesses of this deed of shame!

"A day of trampling and tribulation for Trallwng.
The Trallwng of Llewelyn, and an earthen grave for its possessor!"
Prydydd Môch.[2]

This untoward event is summed up in these words of the old chronicler:—

"Thus died, after a variety of fortunes, Cadogan, the son of Bleddyn ap Cynvyn; a prince whose valour, sense of justice, and other milder virtues, might, in any age but this, have exempted him from a death so cruel and so unworthy of his character."[3]

Retribution, quick but sure, overtook the desperate Madoc after this last and most calamitous misdeed of his. We will again refer to the *Chronicle of the Princes*, and let it tell its own tale of this closing scene in the tragedy:—

"One thousand one hundred and ten was the year of Christ, when Meredith ap Bleddyn sent his family on some enterprise to the land of Llywarch ap Trahaern,[4] to make an incursion. Then it happened, as they were taking their course through the territory of Madoc, son

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[1] *Brut*, p. 108. [2] Mr. Rd. Williams' translation.
[3] *Welsh Chronicle*, pp. 170-1 (*M. C.*, vol. vii, p. 308).
[4] Llywarch seems to have lived in Caereinion. There is a *Moel Trahaern* beyond Llanfair, probably named after Llywarch's father, the Trahaern who perished at Carno in 1079.

of Rhirid, behold a man meeting them, whom they seized, and they questioned him where Madoc, son of Rhirid, was abiding that night; and the man at first denied that he knew; and then, after torturing and urging him, he acknowledged that he was near them. After binding the man, they sent spies to the place, and lurked till it was light the following morning. And when the morning was come, by a sudden enterprise they made an attack upon him, caught him, killed many of his men, and brought him prisoner to Meredith, who received him gladly, and kept him in fetters. Then Owen, son of Cadogan, who was not at home, returned;[1] and when Owen became acquainted with the affair, he came in haste, and Meredith delivered him into his hand; and he took him with pleasure, and blinded him. And they divided between them his share of Powys, which was Caereinion, and the third of Deytheur, and Berriew."[2]

It may be here noted that, five years after this event, an important ecclesiastical change took place in Wales: this was the submission of two Welsh dioceses to the primacy of Canterbury; and this act was effected by the Welsh bishops taking the oath of canonical obedience to Ralph d'Escures, Archbishop of Canterbury. Pope Calixtus II is credited with the initiation of this scheme for the blending together of the English and Welsh churches.

Upon Cadogan's untimely death his elder brother MEREDITH[3] became Regulus of the whole of Powys. This prince was by no means an amiable character, and his rule in Powys was sullied by many acts of cruelty and oppression;[4] notwithstanding, he was a man of spirit and abilities, and his conduct and courage when attacked by the English king in 1118[5] redounds to his credit. In this invasion of Powys, Henry I met with such a spirited opposition from the native prince that the king was glad to retire with all possible speed, having nearly come to an untimely end in one of the skirmishes with the Powysians.[6] This creditable performance on

[1] This incident of Owen's "returning home" must have occurred at Powys Castle.

[2] *Brut*, p. 111.

[3] He could be termed "Meredith II", so as to distinguish him from his predecessor, Meredith ab Owen.

[4] Yorke's *Royal Tribes*, p. 48.

[5] Freeman gives this date as 1121.

[6] *Llwyd*, p. 142.

Meredith's part perhaps accounts for the *eulogium* offered to him by the Strata Florida chronicler upon his death, which occurred in 1132:[1]—"A little after that Meredith ab Bleddyn died—the ornament and safety and defence of all Powys, after undergoing salvatory penance of his body, and sanctity of repentance in his spirit, and the Communion of the Body of Christ and Extreme Unction:" a delicately-worded statement which by no means contradicts that of bluff old Caradoc of Llancarvan, who informs us that Meredith died "under severe contrition for his hellish practices".

With Meredith's death fell the glory of Powys. To be explicit, when Meredith died he bequeathed *Lower Powys* to his son MADOC, and *Upper Powys* he left to his grandson OWEN CYVEILIOG: thus dividing the province.[2] That fatal law of *Gavel-kind*, so disastrous to the best interests of Wales in those days, was responsible for this unhappy arrangement.

Before ending this chapter, it will be well to take a cursory glance at the four princes who bore rule in Lower Powys from the time of the partition onward:—

Madoc ap Meredith, the first Prince of Lower Powys (POWYS VADOC), during his lifetime administered the affairs of the whole province—during the minority of his nephew, the Prince of Upper Powys. He built the Castles[3] of Oswestry, Caereinion[4] and Overton, and founded St. Mary's Church at Meivod—the consecration of which, in 1155, is recorded in the *Chronicle of the Princes.*[5] About his character we are told

[1] 1129, according to the *Chronicle of the Princes.*

[2] There was a third portion of Powys (containing Radnor, Clun, etc.), but this was already in the hands of the Lords Marchers.

[3] Yorke's *Royal Tribes*, p. 51.

[4] Castle Caereinion was built in 1154, and St. Mary's at Meivod in the year following—this shows that Madoc was at that time still administering the affairs of Upper Powys.

[5] Page 185.

that he "feared God and relieved the poor".[1] He died at Winchester in 1159, and was buried in St. Tysilio's Church[2] at Meivod—the burial-place of Powysian princes. Madoc was succeeded by his son, Griffith of Maelor, who married the daughter of Owen, Prince of Gwynedd, and dying in 1191 was also buried at Meivod. He was succeeded by his son Madoc II, who signalised his rule in Powys by founding and endowing the celebrated Abbey of *Valle Crucis* (a daughter house of *Strata Marcella*). This Madoc, dying in 1236, was succeeded by his son Griffith II—at whose death, in 1270, the principality of Powys Vadoc was broken up into a number of petty lordships.

Arms of Madoc ab Maredydd.

Chapter VII.

The Princes of Upper Powys.

We have now reached a transitional period in our history—a period of compromise and adaptation—when the ancient social polity of the Cymry begins to lose much of its distinctive features, and becomes, bit by bit, drawn into the great *feudal* vortex, which had, by this time, already absorbed the Teutonic idea of society, and had now become the centripetal force that was drawing together the divergent Celtic and Teutonic elements of Britain, and amalgamating their systems with its own. By this we do not wish to infer that the Celtic system in any way entered so largely into the composition of Feudalism as did the Teutonic—the

[1] Powel, p. 210. [2] *Brut*, p. 194.

township community—system; all that we wish to point out is, that there is much to be urged against the Pan-Germanic dreams of certain very distinguished English historians, and that the *feudal system* is not a purely Germanic growth, but is the *general* outcome of the one grand central idea of mediæval history—THE EMPIRE. This is, therefore, the "Romanesque Idea" upon which was based the elaborate theories of Church and State current during the middle ages. Both Church and State developed and flourished, and gained their power of cohesion, through their adherence to this one main principle. So far as Wales is concerned, the Romanesque stage is not reached until a period which almost synchronises with the break-up of its Celtic monarchy. After many centuries of dogged resistance to Teutonic aggression, and after long nursing of the vain hope of regaining the lost plains of Lloegr, the Welsh princes now lay aside their exclusive and insular ideas of British supremacy, and are now prepared to acknowledge the return of the Empire in the persons of the Norman kings. It was recognised that WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR and his successors were *de facto* the Emperors of Britain, and not merely the usurping occupants of the West Saxon throne.

This fact of an *Island-Empire*, with its Norman throne established in London, was at once frankly accepted by the Royal Tribe of Powys—the sons of Bleddyn ap Cynvyn and their descendants—and this led to a partial recognition of their status by the English Crown; and, moreover, was the means of preserving their territory from the insults and oppressions of those Norman soldiers of fortune, who were already supplanting the less pliable Celtic rulers of South Wales.

At the latter part of the last chapter we have placed the name of MADOC AP MEREDITH among the Princes of Lower Powys: this is done in order to follow the approved traditions of Welsh history, and also to emphasise the fact that he was progenitor of the ruling

family of Powys Vadoc. It should be borne in mind, however, that Madoc ruled over the whole of Powys up to the day of his death. This accounts for his foundation of the Eglwys Vair at Meivod, and of his erection of the fortress at Castle Caereinion: both of these places being within the Upper moiety of Powys. This prince's chequered career belongs rather to the history of Oswestry and Powys Vadoc than to that of Welsh Pool and Powys Gyveiliog, so we must leave him, after quoting some lines from the poet Gwalchmai's *Ode to Madoc*, which forcibly illustrate the wide extent of Powys at that time:—

> "From the summit of Plynlumon
> To the gate of Chester,
> The chief causes repulsed to the foe;
> From the conspicuous abbey of Bangor (Iscoed)
> To the boundary of Merioneth, he is master."
> —From Gwalchmai's *Ode* (Trans.).

It was in 1148—the year that he built his castle at Oswestry—that we find[1] Madoc confirming the rights of his brother Griffith's sons to the commots of Cyveiliog and Mowddwy. It was in this year that Owen (better known as OWEN CYVEILIOG) came of age, and it was then that he took possession of his patrimony within the Dovey Valley—that beautiful and romantic tract of country extending eastward from the tidal estuary of the Dovey to the hills of Carno, and bounded on the north by Cader Idris and the Arrans, and south by Plynlumon.

Ten years later we find Owen receiving pay from the English monarch (HENRY II), and in the next year —in 1159—he had entered into the lawful and peaceful possession of Upper Powys, upon the death of his uncle Madoc.

UPPER POWYS, or POWYS GYVEILIOG,[2] at the period of its greatest expansion may be said to be more or

[1] *Welsh Chronicle*, p. 177.

[2] Generally called *Powys Wenwynwyn* in the Welsh genealogies and other documents.

less co-terminous with the present COUNTY OF MONTGOMERY; or, to be more explicit, it was made up of the following cantrevs and commots:—Arwystli, Caereinion, Cedewain, Cyveiliog, Deytheur, Gordowr, Llanerchydol, Mechain Iscoed, Mechain Uwchoed, Mochnant (South), Mowddwy and Ystrad Marchell. During Owen's rule, however, Arwystli formed a division of Gwynedd, and did not become restored to Powys until 1197. Cedewain[1] and Mechain Iscoed,[2] again, had chieftains of their own, whose fealty to the Princes of Upper Powys was of a somewhat precarious nature. In our own days the Barony of Powys has shrunk down to the manors comprised within the two Mechains, Mochnant, Caereinion, Llanerchydol and Ystrad Marchell, and three townships of the Gordowr called Teirtref (Buttington, Hope and Trewern).

The fact that Owen Cyveiliog was willing to receive subsidies from the King of England shows that English influence was making great headway in these parts of Wales at that period. This alliance with the national enemy upon the part of the young Prince of Powys became very distasteful to his suzerain, the Prince of Gwynedd, and so, for a time, he was dispossessed of his territories by the then reigning prince, OWEN,[3] who thus asserted his prerogatives as sovereign paramount of Wales in this unpleasant fashion. In 1161 a Powysian chieftain named Howel ab Ieuan,[4] Lord of Arwystli, managed by treachery to seize upon Tavol-

[1] At an early date Cedewain fell away from Upper Powys, becoming part of the vast possessions of the Mortimer family. However, both in the Norwich *Valor* of 1253 and *Survey* of Llewelyn III (*circ.* 1275), it is reckoned as part of this principality.

[2] Mechain Iscoed comprised the parishes of Llanfechain, Llansantffraid ("Mechain" or "Pool" division), Llanyblodwel and Llanymynech, and the trev of Ystum Colwyn. The modern manor does not include the Shropshire portion of this ancient commot.

[3] Owen Gwynedd, "the Eagle of the Eagles of Snowdon" *(Eryr Eryrod Eryri)*, son of Griffith II, founder of the first "Royal Tribe of Wales".

[4] Howel ab Ieuan was a great-grandson of Elystan, the founder of the fifth "Royal Tribe" (*vide* p. 216).

wern Castle in Cyveiliog, an event which caused our prince great perturbation (so the *Brut* informs us). Owen did not rest content until he had recaptured the castle, and had punished the men of Arwystli severely for the part they had taken against him.[1]

Before long Owen Cyveiliog was reinstated in his territories by his victorious over-lord, Owen Gwynedd, who gave him his daughter, Gwenllian, in marriage; and the two princes, thus united by strong family ties, joined forces together when the English king invaded Wales in 1165. In the war which ensued, the Powysian prince took an honourable share, especially at the *Battle of Crogen*, when Henry was forced to retreat with considerable loss and personal danger.[2] We next hear of him joining issue with Owen Vaughan,[3] son of the Prince of Lower Powys, and the two cousins going on a punitive expedition against Iorwerth the Red,[4] Lord of the two Mochnants, who had lately gone over to the English; the outcome of which expedition was the disgrace and banishment of Iorwerth, and the division of his territories between the two Owens.

In 1166 Owen Cyveiliog receded from the Welsh confederation, and once more was received with open arms by the English king—an act which brought quick retribution at its heels, for immediately the other Welsh princes took steps to punish their disaffected colleague, and this they did by invading Powys. In this invasion the Castle at Trallwng seems to have escaped misfortune, but the neighbouring fortress of Castle Caereinion[5] fell into the hands of the Prince of

[1] In recounting this episode, the *Bruts* confuse Owen of Cyveiliog with Owen of Gwynedd.

[2] Canon Bridgeman's *Princes of Upper Powys* (*Mont. Coll.*, vol. i, p. 9).

[3] *Vaughan, Vychan:* a cognomen equal to "Junior".

[4] Iorwerth Goch is the ancestor of the Bonner-Maurices of Bodynfol, the Pryces of Cyfronydd, the Kynastons of Hardwick, etc., and other illustrious Powys-land families.

[5] The site of the ancient Castle of Caereinion is upon Pen-y-Voel, a hill situate three miles west of Welsh Pool, at the head of the Nant-y-Caws glen, and near to St. Garmon's Church.

Gwynedd, who handed it over to the custody of Owen Vaughan, whilst Tavolwern in the land of Cyveiliog succumbed to the attacks of RHYS AP GRIFFITH, Prince of South Wales. Owen, however, partly retrieved his misfortunes before the year was out, for, advancing with an army of Frenchmen[1] (probably lent to him by the Angevin king), he recaptured Castle Caereinion, killed all the garrison, broke the walls down, and then razed them to the ground. With this incident terminates the short-lived history of this stronghold.

It is difficult to decide to which moiety of Powys the *talaeth* of Mathraval had now descended; for the princes of the Lower portion had already fixed their residence at Dinas Bran in the Dee valley, whilst their kinsmen in the Upper portion had now definitely fixed upon Cadogan's mansion at Welsh Pool, now that Tavolwern had been destroyed. The palace of Mathraval was situate geographically in Upper Powys, yet Owen does not seem to have availed himself of the dignity attached to the occupation of such an historical abode. Possibly strategical reasons, and the superior attractions of the Severn valley for hunting purposes, prompted our prince to forsake Eliseg's castle in Dyffryn Meivod and take up his abode at Pool. It was in the latter place, probably, that the erudite prince composed his stately but joyous poem of the *Hirlas Horn*, and it must have been at our castle that Cynddelw depicted the endless round of convivialities and courtesies which surrounded the everyday life of Owen "the munificent".

(4) "The liquor of Owen the Mild is joyfully distributed
In the land by the side of the Severn,
With a truly amiable profusion;
And yonder are they bringing it.

(6) "Liquor is pressed upon us by the light of moon and stars,
By the ruler of the impetuous red chieftains,
About Long Mountain the eagle is great and stately,
About Severn happy is the smile of men.

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[1] *Brut*, p. 204.

(8) "Behold my prince this day mounted on his cars,
Not a lion beneath the moon will dare to assail him;
With couched lance in the day of trial will he lead the assault
Of the impetuous thrust, in his golden mail."
—Cynddelw's *Ode to Owen Cyveiliog*.[1]

In consequence of his continued fidelity to the English crown, Owen's territories were again invaded by his indignant fellow-countrymen in 1171, and he was compelled to submit and give hostages for his future conduct to the redoubtable ruler of South Wales, Rhys ab Griffith.

In the following year[2] Owen performed a notable deed—and a deed that had no connection with the profession of arms—this was the foundation of the renowned ABBEY OF POOL (otherwise *Strata Marcella*), erected upon the banks of the Severn at Gungrog Fawr, some distance below the town and castle of Pool (Trallwng). This noble foundation was given "to the brethren of the Cistercian Order", and it is called in the charter "The Church of the Blessed and Ever-Virgin Mary of *Alba Domus* in the land of Ystrad Marchell".[3] Its first Abbot was Griffith, who probably was a noted man in his day, for his death (occurring in 1196) is mentioned in the *Chronicle of the Princes*.[4] A full and continuous historical account of this Abbey is given in the late Mr. Morris C. Jones' "History" (published by the Powys-land Club).[5]

Giraldus Cambrensis informs us that Owen was the most eloquent of the Welsh princes, and conspicuous for the good management of his territory. Having generally favoured the Royal cause, he had contracted a great familiarity with Henry II. Being seated one day at table with the King, Henry, as a mark of peculiar honour and regard, sent him one of his own loaves. Owen immediately broke it into small pieces,

[1] Translation from Stephens' *Literature of the Kymry*, pp. 126-27.
[2] In 1170, according to Bishop Tanner.
[3] Foundation Charter. [4] P. 242.
[5] *Montgomeryshire Collections*, vols. iv, v, and vi.

like bread given away in charity; and, having like an almoner placed them at a distance from him, he took them up one by one and ate them. The King required an explanation of this proceeding; the satirical Welsh prince, with a smile, replied, "I thus follow the example of my lord": keenly alluding to the avaricious disposition of the King, who was wont to retain for a long time in his own hands the vacant ecclesiastical benefices.[1]

The above incident occurred at Shrewsbury. Shortly afterwards, in 1177, Owen was summoned by Henry II to meet him at Oxford, in order that the two might confer together upon the affairs of Wales.

In 1188, Owen managed to come under the ban of the Church. It happened in this manner:—Baldwin, Archbishop of Canterbury, set out for Wales, having for his mission a twofold object—first of all, the preaching of the Crusade; and secondly, the saying Mass in each of the four cathedrals, which act had never been done by any former English primate; a proceeding having for its ulterior object the complete subjugation of the Welsh sees to the throne of St. Augustine. Owen, with his usual shrewdness, at once comprehended the scheme of the wily Archbishop; so when that prelate arrived at Shrewsbury, accompanied by Giraldus, the Archdeacon of Brecon,[2] with the intention of receiving the Welsh princes in conference, he found the urbane and cultured Prince of Powys, Mons. Ouen de Chevaliac,[3] alone among his colleagues refusing to go out of his way to meet him. Archbishop Baldwin met this rebuff by immediately passing sentence of excommunication upon the refractory Owen.

The prince did not remain long in his contumacy, for as soon as the Archbishop had returned to England he made his peace with the Church; this was quickly

[1] Hoare's *Giraldus* (quoted by Canon Bridgeman).

[2] A few years after this incident, we find Owen's son, Gwenwynwyn, generously advocating the claims of Giraldus to the see of St. Davids (see Stephens' *Lit. Kymry*, p. 89).

[3] So called by his French allies.

followed by his abdication, and his retirement to the Abbey of Pool. Here he quietly settled down to a peaceful old age—"having assumed the habit of religion"[1]—first of all, however, handing over the reins of government to his son GWENWYNWYN, and endowing him with all his lands, entire—with the exception of the manors of Broniarth and Llanerchydol, which he assigned to his natural son, Caswallon—the same to revert to Gwenwynwyn upon Caswallon's demise.

The venerable founder of Pool Abbey died within its walls in 1197, full of years and honours. Thus a peaceful end was the lot of this liberal and enlightened prince, whose poetic talents almost excelled his reputation as a warrior and a statesman. The stone coffin that enclosed his remains (which the late Mr. Morris C. Jones, in his History of the Abbey,[2] hoped would be discovered some day) seems to have been discovered in 1890, during the excavation carried on at Strata Marcella at that time. No human remains were found, however, within the sarcophagus, so it was tentatively designated "the Founder's Grave", and has been lately enclosed within an iron railing.

Gwenwynwyn's first act upon entering into his patrimony did not bode well for his future conduct. In concert with his half-brother, Caswallon, he made a predatory excursion by night, and took and plundered the castle of Careghova,[3] and cruelly put to death its owner, his aged kinsman, Owen Vaughan, Lord of Mechain Iscoed.

His next exploit wore a better aspect. He recovered his castle of Powys, on the terms he had lost it, from that militant ecclesiastic, Hubert, Archbishop of Canterbury, Viceroy of England.[4] We will let the *Welsh*

[1] *Brut*, p. 251.
[2] Written in 1871 (*Mont. Coll.*, vol. iv, p. 29).
[3] Near Llanymynech.
[4] The English King, Richard I, was at that time absent from England, being engaged in the Crusades.

Chronicle tell its own tale of this stirring episode in the annals of the ancient castle of Pool.

"In the same year (1196), Henry,[1] Archbishop of Canterbury, Justice of all England, having with him an assemblage of the earls and barons of England, with all the princes of Gwynedd, made an attack upon the castle of Gwenwynwyn, in Trallwng Llewelyn; and it availed them not, for as they flung their engines to the top of the castle in order to get in, when they got to the breaches, they were hurled to the bottom of the fosse, so as to break their necks, and others were drowned. And after fighting severely against it with various instruments and devices of warfare, at length by wonderful science they gained the castle by sending miners to dig under it, and make secret passages underground. And thus the garrison was compelled to surrender, and nevertheless, they all escaped at large, with their clothes and arms, except one, who was killed.

"And then before the end of that year, Gwenwynwyn collected his men together, and fought manfully against the said castle, and compelled it to surrender to him, under an agreement also of granting liberty to the garrison to depart in safety with their clothes and arms."[2]

Gwenwynwyn about the same time had also the satisfaction of winning back the cantrev of Arwystli, which had, since 1171, been in the hands of the South Wales princes. These two successes, occurring so closely together, at once brought the Powysian ruler prominently before the eyes of his cotemporaries, both in England and Wales.

". . . . . Gwenwynwyn sanguinis haeres,
Ante obitum patris, totam subjecit Arustli;
Inde Polae Castrum, quod vi possederat Anglus,
Conditione pari, qua perdidit ante, recepit."—*Pentarchia.*[3]

The date of the recapture of Powys Castle is assigned to the year 1197. In this year we find Gwenwynwyn consorting with that wicked South Wales chieftain, Maelgwn ab Rhys, in an attack upon the castle and the pillaging of the town of Aberystwyth, which ended in their subjugation of Cardiganshire, and the carrying-off of its ruler, the lord Griffith (Maelgwn's brother),

[1] Hubert?
[2] *Brut y Tywysogion*, p. 243.
[3] Quoted by Yorke in his *Royal Tribes*, p. 71.

to Gwenwynwyn's castle in Powys, and his subsequent betrayal into the hands of the English.

In 1198, Gwenwynwyn conceived a great design: this was the liberty and extension of Powys to its ancient limits. With views so popular, he raised a large army of compatriots, and marching southward, besieged William de Breos in his castle of Payn, in Radnorshire. He lay three weeks without effect before it, whilst Breos had time to collect assistance, and was reinforced by Jeffrey Fitzpeter, the Justiciar of England, who had previously released Griffith, Lord of Cardigan (his prisoner), and put him at the head of the men of South Wales, who joined him in great numbers. Gwenwynwyn recklessly engaged the whole force thus brought against him, in the open plain before the castle, and the outcome of the engagement was that he was badly defeated, and had to make the best of his chances in order to reach his own territories in safety.[1]

The active spirit of Gwenwynwyn was yet unsubdued, and from this time forward we find him constantly engaged in the petty warfare of his country. Time and space will not allow us to enter much further into the many interesting details of this prince's life, so a few words will suffice to bring us to the close of his career.

We have now reached the thirteenth century: LLEWELYN II[2] is Prince of Wales, and JOHN has already ascended the English throne. Between these two monarchs, Gwenwynwyn for a number of years pits himself. In 1202 he refuses allegiance to the Welsh prince, an act of disobedience which Llewelyn promptly avenges by invading Gwenwynwyn's lands during the latter's visit to Shrewsbury. However, before the year was out, the Prince of Powys had transferred his allegiance from John to Llewelyn, upon receiving a dispensation from the Pope to do so. In 1207 the prince again quarrels with his over-lord; and this time

[1] Yorke's *Royal Tribes*, p. 72.

[2] Llewelyn ab Iorwerth ab Owen Gwynedd.

he was to experience the baseness and perfidy of his whilom friend and patron, the English King. John, on purpose to win the favour of Llewelyn, invited Gwenwynwyn to Shrewsbury, who unsuspectingly fell into the trap thus insidiously laid for him; for, upon his arrival there, he was immediately thrown into prison. Meanwhile, his lands were devastated by Llewelyn. He was restored to his liberty by John three years after,[1] by whose assistance he recovered his possessions, including the chatellany of Montgomery.[2] In the next year we hear of him accompanying the King in an unsuccessful expedition into North Wales.

Both England and Wales alike were now suffering from the Papal Interdict. With ulterior designs in view, in 1212 Pope Innocent III withdrew this ban from the princes and people of Wales, and at the same time absolved Llewelyn of Gwynedd, Gwenwynwyn of Upper Powys, Madoc II of Lower Powys, and Maelgwn of South Wales from their allegiance to the English crown.[3] Gwenwynwyn at once entered the ranks of the Welsh confederation, and to prove his sincerity to the national cause he proceeded to lay siege to Mathraval Castle, then held for the King (in the midst of Gwenwynwyn's own territories) by Robert Vieuxpont. The ancient fortress was upon the point of surrendering when the English monarch himself arrived upon the scene, and on August 2nd, 1212, John had the satisfaction of raising the siege, and in order that Mathraval should at no future time fall into the hands of the native princes, he levelled it to the ground. In 1215 we find the English barons in arms against their king, and Gwenwynwyn lending his help to the Lord Marcher, Fitzwarine of Whittington; these two worthies combined being enabled to defeat John with severe loss. Before the year was out, Llewelyn and Gwenwynwyn had made an attack upon Shrewsbury, and made

[1] Yorke's *Royal Tribes*, p. 72.
[2] Sandford's *Montgomery Castle* (*Mont. Coll.*, vol. x. p. 72).
[3] Llwyd's *History of Wales*, p. 211.

themselves masters of that important border town. The Powysian prince probably earned his title of "Torch of Pengwern"[1] at this time, thus showing that the treatment he meted out to the ancient capital of his principality did not err upon the side of mercy. Once more, in 1216, we find him intriguing and plotting against the Welsh prince, until Llewelyn, now exasperated beyond endurance at Gwenwynwyn's perfidy, drove him from his territories. Our prince fled for refuge to Randulph, Earl of Chester, and shortly afterwards ended his troublous career in exile.

Reviewing his character, very little good is to be found in it; but he was a man of spirit in the field. He had, moreover, in a religious sense, improved his father's foundation at Pool,[2] having in 1199 granted a fresh charter to the abbey; and again, in 1201, given all the pasturage of his province of Cyveiliog to the abbot and brethren of Pool.

The account given in the *Welsh Chronicle* of the embassy sent by Llewelyn to Gwenwynwyn, before the final rupture, is of some interest, because it must have been to Welsh Pool that the envoys were sent, at that time the one and only seat of the "Court of Powys".

In that year (1216), Gwenwynwyn, Lord of Powys, made peace with John, King of England, treating with contempt the oath and the engagement which he had plighted to the chieftains of England and Wales, and violating the homage which he had done to Llewelyn ab Iorwerth, and surrendering the hostages which he had given thereon. And when Llewelyn became acquainted with this, he took it heavily upon him, and sent to him bishops and abbots and other men of great authority, bearing with them the letters and charters, and the registers of the compact and homage which he had made, and laboured by every thought and affection and deed to call him back. And when that availed him nothing, he assembled an army, calling to him most of the princes of Wales, and entered Powys to make war upon Gwenwynwyn, and compelled him to flee to the county of Chester, and took possession of his whole territory to himself.[3]

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[1] Sir Walter Scott gives him also the soubriquet of "Wolf of Plynlumon".

[2] Yorke's *Royal Tribes*, p. 73.

[3] *Brut y Tywysogion*, p. 291.

Sir Walter Scott, in his romance, *The Betrothed*, gives us a glowing picture of Gwenwynwyn's great feast at Powys Castle in the Easter of 1187; and there we have depicted the turbulent prince seated in the banqueting-hall of Castell Coch, wearing the Eurdorch (the badge of Celtic royalty), and surrounded by his councillors and the "tall men" or champions of Powys; whilst Cadwallon, the chief bard, poured forth the tide of song, and, to the accompaniment of the harp, told of the glories of the Cymric fatherland, and the prowess of its sons in the field of battle.

Gwenwynwyn had married Margaret, daughter of Robert Corbet, Lord of Caus:[1] by her he had three sons, Griffith, Owen and Madoc—all of them minors at the time of their father's death (*circiter* 1218). At this time HENRY III had already ascended the throne of England, and one of his first acts, at the Council of Worcester (February, 1218), was to make a grant to the Prince of Wales of all the lands formerly belonging to Gwenwynwyn; Llewelyn, on his part, undertaking to provide reasonable sustenance for the heirs of Gwenwynwyn, and to assign a dower to Margaret, his widow.[2]

The *de jure* Prince of Powys now was GRIFFITH, Gwenwynwyn's eldest son: but he was not allowed to enter into his patrimony so long as the masterful Llewelyn was alive; and, as that Prince's death did not occur until 1240, he was kept out of his lawful inheritance for upwards of twenty years.

Whether or no the dower assigned by Llewelyn to the Lady Margaret and her children was the castle and lands of LA POLE[3] we are not informed, but it would

[1] The site of Caus Castle is near Westbury, upon the English side of the Long Mountain. It is sometimes spelt *Caures* and *Caurs*. The name is derived from the *Pays de Caux* in Normandy. *Alreton* is the Saxon name.

[2] "Royal Councils of Worcester," *Archæological Journal*, vol. x, pp. 304-5.

[3] It was about this period that the ancient *Trallwng* became changed into the mediæval *La Pole*.

seem (judging from an occurrence which we are now about to relate) that such was the case. In 1233, so it seems, Griffith, with the consent of the English king, made a distinct effort to assert his ancestral rights and privileges. The King moved in this matter so far as to issue writs, dated at Evesham, September 23rd, commanding his constables at Clun, Montgomery[1] and Oswestry, severally, "to receive Griffith ab Gwenwynwyn and his people into their towns, whenever this should be necessary".[2] Seemingly, Griffith availed himself of Henry's kindness, and made the border towns each a basis of his operations. But a terrible retribution was awaiting the disaffected districts in Powys-land. Llewelyn, with his wonted impetuosity, struck a hard and decisive blow; and soon the good towns of Clun, Welsh Pool and Oswestry lay low under the devastating hand of the great Pendragon—their smoking ruins eloquent witnesses of the recent presence of the proud, resentful "Lion of Gwynedd"!

"A Lion that brought, and will bring when he pleases,
Three huge hosts into Trallwng."
Llywarch ab Llewelyn's *Marwnad i Llewelyn ab Iorwerth.*[3]

The dire calamity that thus befell our town and its castle is cursorily mentioned by the *Welsh Chronicle* in these words:—

And then on his return, Llewelyn ab Iorwerth burned the town of Clun, and subjugated the Valley of the Teme. And after that, having burned Trallwng, he proceeded to Castell Coch, and razed it to the ground, and burned the town of Oswestry.[4]

It was after Llewelyn's death, in 1240, and when his son and successor, DAVID II, had been on the throne of Gwynedd for over a year, that Griffith came into his hereditary possessions. He began his rule in Powys as a subject of the English king; and, if it were

[1] Henry himself had paid a visit to Montgomery a week prior to the issue of this writ (*Mont. Coll.*, vol. x, p. 83).
[2] *Mont. Coll.*, vol. i, p. 22.
[3] Trans. Mr. Rd. Williams.
[4] *Brut y Tywysogion*, p. 321.

not for the fact that he was the direct heir of the long line of sovereign princes of Powys, and that the tattered remains of this once important principality were still his—if these important considerations were absent—there would be nothing left to differentiate his position from that of any other nobleman who held his barony *in capite* of the English crown. Such were the humble straits to which the thirteenth-century heirs of Brochwel, Eliseg, Mervyn, Griffith and Bleddyn had been reduced! The downfall, or rather "shrinkage",

THE SEAL OF HAWYS, LADY POWYS.

of Powys may be attributed to three main causes; they were these:—(1) the *gavelling* of their lands, by our princes, among all their sons—instead of leaving the patrimony intact in the hands of the eldest son; (2) the jealousy of the Princes of Gwynedd, who were continually encroaching upon the rights and privileges of the Princes of Powys and South Wales; and (3) the constant encroachments of the lords marchers. These three causes combined led to the gradual decline, and at last to the total extinction, of the *talaeth* of Powys.

When Griffith de la Pole came into his little principality he found the ancestral home at La Pole,

together with the adjoining *ville*, desolate and forsaken. His first work, then, was construction, not destruction; and so for many years onward he seems to have been looking after internal affairs more than busying himself with his neighbours' concerns—after the unfortunate manner of his father and grandfather. One of his first acts must have been the restoration of the Castle, and this work was probably completed before he brought his bride home in 1242: she was Hawys, daughter of John l'Estrange, Lord of Ness and Cheswardine.

It must have been at this time that the *ville* of Pool Town sprung up on the south side of the Lledan stream, and nearer situated to the castle than was the "Welsh Town"—Trallwng Llewelyn—destroyed by Llewelyn II in 1233.[1] It was at the very time that Pool Town was erected that the foundation of St. Mary's Church was accomplished by Griffith: and for the support of this assertion there is evidence to be found in the structure of the present church, which undoubtedly reveals traces of thirteenth-century work; and there is, moreover, the evidence of the Norwich *Valor* of 1253, which makes mention of one "Yvone, Rectore ecc'e de Pola". In this early ecclesiastical schedule there is also mention made of the "Capella de Trallwng", which is classed with Kegidua and Llandysilio as belonging to the mother-church of Llandrinio. Now, this *Capella de Trallwng* is undoubtedly the ancient St. Llewelyn's in the Welsh Town, and its inclusion within the *parochia* of Llandrinio represents one of the many difficulties which encounter the student of local ecclesiastical history.[2] Again, how did it come to pass that another church was required in such close proximity to this ancient "Capell Sainte Lleu'n": was the new church of St. Mary erected for the exclusive use of the inhabitants of Pool Town,

[1] The present town has outgrown its former limits (the Pool Town and Welsh Town), and now spreads into the townships of Trallwm Gollen and Gungrog Fechan.

[2] In 1376 the living of Pool became annexed to the rectory of Meivod, at the instance of Bishop Llewelyn of St. Asaph.

whilst the older foundation was reserved for the people of the other portion? Two other questions we may ask before we finish with this point—what was the status of St. Mary's church; and, did it derive its dedication from the Abbey of La Pole, or else from the *Eglwys Vair* at Meivod?[1] The unravelling of these ecclesiastical conundrums can be reserved for another occasion, and we must now revert to secular affairs.

Besides erecting the new town and church at La Pole, Griffith was a benefactor to the townspeople in another respect: we refer to the charter he gave to "his beloved and faithful burgesses of La Pole", whereby he erected their town into a free borough.[2] To this munificent ruler of Powys Gyveiliog our town is indebted for its first municipal privileges, whereby it received the benefits of the *Hansa*, or Merchant-Guild, and other privileges of the British law after the manner of the famous charter granted to the citizens of Hereford. Griffith's Charter is recited at length in the Inspeximus Charter of Edward de Cherleton, 7 Henry IV, but no date is attached to it. It is in the following terms:—

[*Translation.*]

Griffith, son of Gwenwynwyn, Lord of Cyveiliog, to all the faithful, who shall see or hear this present charter, Greeting in the Lord: Be it known unto all men that I have granted, and in this my present charter have confirmed, unto our beloved and faithful burgesses of La Pole and their heirs, that they should have a free Borough in the town of La Pole, so that the aforesaid burgesses and their heirs shall be free from all customs and services to me and my heirs throughout all my lands, wheresoever to me belonging.

I have likewise granted to the same burgesses and their heirs, that they shall be free from toll and theam, from passage and pontage,

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[1] Note, that the mother-church of Meivod and the burial-place of the Powysian princes was *Eglwys Tysilio;* but the most ancient of the trio was probably the *Eglwys Gwyddvarch.*

[2] In Welsh terminology a town (*tref*) which is possessed of municipal privielges becomes a *Bwrdeisdref.*

throughout all my lands, from heriots and reliefs, from tallage and all customs to me belonging.

And lest any bailiff of ours should lay hand upon my said burgesses and their heirs against the liberties and customs of the British law, which we have freely granted to the same burgesses and their heirs, that they may have and hold the said British law as freely and wholly as the citizens of Hereford hold in all their customs to the said law belonging, so that no one shall trade in the said Borough, unless by the said law or at the will of the aforesaid burgesses.

I have also granted for me and my heirs, that my said burgesses may have a guild of trading with hanse and with the assize of bread and beer, and all the liberties appertaining to the said guild.

Also that if any "nativus extraneus" come unto the said Borough, and hold lands, and so be in scot and lot with the said burgesses for one year and one day, he shall there remain free and never be delivered to his lord.

I have also granted for me and my heirs to my burgesses of La Pole and their heirs, that they may arrest all thieves, murderers and malefactors found in the said Borough, and imprison in their prison and judge them.

I, therefore, the Lord Griffith and my heirs to the aforesaid burgesses and their heirs, all the liberties as above mentioned for me and my heirs, will for ever warrant and defend. In witness thereof to this writing I have affixed my seal, these being witnesses: John Fitzalan, Thomas Corbet, John Strange, Madoc ab Gwenwynwyn, Griffith ab Madoc, Wen ab Wronen,[1] Griffith ab Cynvelin, Einion ab Adaf, and many others.

This charter must have been granted some years before 1279—the year that EDWARD I gave power to Griffith to hold a weekly fair, every Monday, "at his manor of Trevnant in Powis,[2] and two fairs yearly of three days' duration". This charter of the King's was to recompense Griffith for the compulsory closing of his markets and fairs at Pool, which were supposed to be doing damage to the King's markets at Montgomery. However, in 1282 Edward rescinds the arbitrary edict he had previously issued with regard to the Pool markets, and concedes to Griffith "that he and his heirs for ever should hold a weekly market on every

[1] Gwen ab Goronwy. Goronwy had married Meddevys, sister of Prince Gwenwynwyn; he is the ancestor of the Pryces of Gunley and other Montgomeryshire families.

[2] Trefnant, a township in the Shropshire portion of Alberbury parish, then included in the Gordowr.

Monday at La Pole, and also three annual fairs of three days' duration" ["et prefato Griffino concessimus, quod ipse et heredes sui imperpetuum habeant unum mercatum singulis septimanis per diem Lune apud predictum manerium suum de La Pole et unam feriam ibidem singulis annis per tres dies duraturam"].[1] Thus, Monday has been the market-day at Welsh Pool for over six centuries.[2]

We must now turn back to an earlier period of our prince's public life, and hastily retrace our steps along the course of his career as a prince of the Cymric League—that ancient confederation now fast drawing to its close.

During the short period that David II held the sceptre of Gwynedd, Griffith resolutely refused to yield to the claims and pretensions of that prince; and when David's successor, LLEWELYN III,[3] became Prince of All Wales he still remained true to his allegiance to his friend and protector, Henry III. Matters did not take a serious turn until the year 1256, when Llewelyn made a determined effort to bring about the subjugation of Powys. He carried his plans into operation by leading an army of expedition into Mid-Wales, with himself at the head, assisted by his lieutenants, Meredith ab Rhys and Meredith ab Owen; and then, we are informed by the *Welsh Chronicle*,[4] he subdued "the whole of the territory of Griffith ab Gwenwynwyn, except the castle of Trallwng, and part of the Vale of Severn, and a little of Caereinion;[5] and he destroyed

[1] *Rot. Cart.*, 10 Edw. I, No. 1 (*Mont. Coll.*, vol. i, p. 130).

[2] Griffith's family were benefactors to other Montgomeryshire towns: Llanidloes and Machynlleth received their first charters from his son Owen de la Pole, in 1286 and 1291 respectively; Llanfyllin, from another son, Llewelyn de la Pole, in 1293; and a weekly market was obtained for Llandrinio by another son of his, Griffith de la Pole, in 1309.

[3] Called Llewelyn ab Griffith in the *Welsh Chronicle*.

[4] *Brut*, p. 343.

[5] The "little of Caereinion" probably represents the part which about that time became detached from the main portion of the commot

the Castle of Bydydon.[1] In the ensuing year Griffith was driven altogether from Powys by the implacable Llewelyn, and his territories seem to have been handed over for a time to Griffith II, Lord of Powys Vadoc.[2] Griffith de la Pole brought this calamity upon himself through his own folly, for it followed immediately upon an incident (related by Mr. T. Morgan Owen in his article *The Ford of Montgomery*, published by the Powys-land Club)[3]—the account of which we now give :—

In 1257 Llewelyn, accompanied by Meredith ab Owen, and by Meredith ab Rhys, fifth in descent from Tewdwr Mawr,[4] approached the Ford of Montgomery almost as far as Berriew,[5] where an armed force under certain Barons, with the inevitable Welsh traitor in their midst (on this occasion the traitor took the form of Griffith ab Gwenwynwyn, Prince of Upper Powys), awaited their arrival for a time. But instead of opposing the Welsh, the Barons and their followers fled pell-mell to Montgomery. Perhaps Llewelyn's destruction of Welshpool by fire intimidated them."[6]

In 1263 we find Griffith suing for terms of peace from Llewelyn, and on December 12th of that year a final concord was made between the two princes: the substance of the treaty was that Griffith should be reinstated in his territory, and in return he was to do homage to the Welsh sovereign, and acknowledge that his land of Powys was held in fief to the crown of Gwynedd; and both princes promised each other mutual support in case of war; and the treaty further provided "that if Griffith should lose his castle of La Pole by war, Llewelyn undertook to provide him with

and added to the commot of Llanerchydol—now included within the Borough of Pool.

[1] *Bydydon = Buttington:* Griffith's manor-house or "castle" beyond Severn, now Buttington Hall.

[2] *Brut*, p. 345.

[3] *Mont. Coll.*, vol. xi, p. 161.

[4] Tudor the Great, Prince of South Wales.

[5] Near Berriew is a place called *Trwst Llewelyn.*

[6] The writer does not give his authority for the statement he makes about Welshpool having been destroyed, at this time, by Llewelyn.

another castle, where he might safely keep his goods and his family, until he should have recovered his own castle."[1] The Prince of Powys was now fairly enlisted in the national cause; and we find him proving his sincerity to Llewelyn immediately by destroying Mold Castle, in Flintshire—at that time in the hands of the King's officers.[2]

We have seen how our prince commenced his early life under the protection of King Henry III, and how, after he had come into his hereditary possessions, he remained true to his English allegiance for years, and that his loyalty survived the first outburst of Welsh glory and success. It was not until his country had been conquered by Llewelyn, and lost to the English beyond all reasonable hope of recovery, and his claims to his ancient territory of the Gordowr (lying east of the Severn) had been practically repudiated in favour of the Lord of Caus,[3] that at length he joined the standard of his native country, entered into an alliance offensive and defensive with Llewelyn, and received back from him his territory, to be held of the Prince of Wales. This state of things was subsequently recognised by the King of England, who acknowledged the title assumed by Llewelyn, and consented to his receiving the fealty of homage of all the barons of Wales;[4] so that Powys-land, with its town and castle of La Pole, was thus once more annexed to the principality of Wales, and so continued for a period of twelve years.

In 1274 we find Llewelyn hastily summoning Griffith to meet him at Dolvorwyn Castle, and upon his arrival there bitterly upbraiding him for deceit and treachery. Griffith seems to have been unable to rebut these charges; and so he received condign punishment at the

[1] *Hengwrt MSS.*, No. 119. [2] *Brut*, p. 351.

[3] This happened in 1259, but eventually the land beyond Severn was restored to the Powys family, upon their consenting to hold it for a knight's fee of the Lord of Caus.

[4] *Vide* Canon Bridgeman's history, vol. i. *Mont. Coll.*

hands of his suzerain, by the latter taking from him his province of Arwystli and thirteen trevs in Cyveiliog, as well as carrying off his eldest son Owen to Gwynedd, as a hostage.

In the following year the final rupture between Llewelyn and Griffith took place. And the account of this quarrel, after making all due allowance for its having reached us through the partisans of Llewelyn, is by no means creditable to Griffith. It appears that in the spring of 1275 Llewelyn, being at his palace at Aber, entertained his brother David as a guest, together with David's retainers, and expected with friendly hospitality the arrival of young Owen,[1] Griffith's son, to share their social board, and the pleasures of the chase. Prince Owen arrived, but the knights, who were to accompany him, were prevented from coming by the bad weather.[2] David, being much troubled by this circumstance, left his brother's court abruptly, and Owen, disconcerted, and fearing that one or other of his accomplices might betray him, made full confession to Llewelyn—in the presence of the Bishop of Bangor and other notabilities—of a formidable conspiracy against the prince's life, the ringleader of which was the graceless David. Pressed for further details, young Owen made a clean breast of it—and in so doing implicated his own people at Welsh Pool, for he now declared "that the terms of the conspiracy, reduced to writing and signed with the seal of the conspirators, were in his mother's custody in a certain chest at the Castle of La Pole". Llewelyn, thereupon, sent five noblemen to Griffith, with the view of persuading him to make an amicable settlement. "Griffith received the messengers in a friendly manner, and pressed them to pass the night at his Castle of La Pole, on the understanding that he would accompany them to Llewelyn in the morning. But when the morrow came, instead of fulfilling his engagements, he shut up the messengers

[1] He was a hostage at that time.
[2] Williams' *History of Wales*, p. 391.

in prison; he fortified his castle with more than a hundred men-at-arms, laying in provisions and all other things necessary for the siege and defence of a castle; and having raised the standard of war on the greater tower, and burned the houses outside, as was the custom in time of war, he himself, with his family, went over to the prince's enemies, and committed gross outrages and depredations in his lands."[1]

The sequel to this unhappy affair is told us in the *Chronicle of the Princes*. After reciting what had previously taken place, the *Chronicle* goes on to say:—

And when the Prince (Llewelyn) heard that, he assembled all Wales to fight against the Castle of Trallwng. And when he had arrived there with his army, the garrison delivered up the castle to him; and when he had liberated the garrison and the messengers, he burned the castle and destroyed it to the ground. After that he subdued all the territory of Griffith without opposition, and placed his own officers in all the territory.[2]

Meanwhile, the last great struggle of the House of Cunedda against the overwhelming power of England was proceeding apace; and it was during one of the armistices that intervened in the midst of that war between the last Llewelyn of Wales and the first Edward of England, that young OWEN DE LA POLE found himself released from his lonely prison in Gwynedd. This event took place at the Martinmas of 1277—by virtue of the *Treaty of Conway*, at that time signed between Edward and Llewelyn.

On June 9th, 1281, King Edward addressed a letter to the Welsh prince informing him that he had instructed his judiciaries to decide the long-pending cause between Llewelyn and Griffith over the disputed province of Arwystli, in accordance with the laws and customs of Wales; but the promise of speedy adjudication was not fulfilled, and Llewelyn, provoked by frequent delays and irritated by fruitless summonses, was rendered at length fiercely indignant by Edward's

[1] Rymer's *Fœdera* (quoted by Canon Bridgeman).
[2] *Brut y Tywysogion*, p. 361.

absolute refusal to bring the case into court, unless the Prince would consent to have it tried by English laws. He once more risked the fortunes of war, and perished by an untimely fate in the following year on the banks of the Yrvon, near Builth.[1] With Llewelyn's death, in 1282, fell the star and sceptre of Gwynedd, and with this gallant prince there also perished the great *Pendragonship* of Celtic Britain.

> Till yet once more ere set of sun they saw
> The Dragon of the great Pendragonship.
>
> Tennyson's *Guinevere.*

After the Treaty of Conway, in the autumn of 1277, our Powysian prince, now once more under the protection of the English King, obtained possession of his lands and dignities; and early in the following year we find him, in almost royal language, disposing of his lands amongst his sons: giving to his eldest son, OWEN (surnamed De la Pole)[2] the princely mansion at La Pole (now dismantled), together with the commots of Caereinion,[3] Cyveiliog, Llanerchydol and Ystrad Marchell, and the cantrev of Arwystli. His other territories he assigns to his other sons, viz., Llewelyn, John, William,[4] Griffith and David, and they were to hold them in fee to Owen, their eldest brother, "and that they should do homage to the same Owen and his heirs." Provisions were made in the will for the restoration of the dismantled castle, and for a dower for his wife. The dower thus assigned to the Lady Hawys consisted of the commot of Deytheur, the manor of Buttington, and the *villes* of Gungrog and Llandybo. Among the witnesses to this important deed are Einion, Bishop of St. Asaph, Griffith the

[1] *Mont. Coll.*, vol. xv, p. 368.

[2] Sometimes called Owen Arwystli, because he held the cantrev of Arwystli some years before his father's death, at such times that it was not forcibly withheld from him by Llewelyn.

[3] With the exception of certain *villes.*

[4] William de la Pole, Lord of Mawddwy, is the common ancestor of the Earls of Powis and Bradford (Newport).

Archdeacon, James, Abbot of La Pole, Roger de Mortimer, Roger de Clifford, and other notabilities.

After Llewelyn's destruction of the castle, the Prince of Powys and his family retired to their manor of Buttington, upon the other side of Severn[1]—or, rather, they began to reside there when things settled down in 1277—and it was here, at Buttington Hall, that the aged prince died in 1286. His widow used this place as the dower-house after his death. It was just at this time that the controversy between the Bishops of Hereford and St. Asaph was raging over the ecclesiastical position of that much-contested territory—the Gordowr—the Welsh bishop urging that these *villes*, being in Powys-land, were *de facto* attached to his see; whilst Swinfield of Hereford, with equal show of reason, claimed the Gordowr as being an integral portion of the Marches. The suit eventually was decided in favour of Hereford; and so, on November 22nd, 1288, the principal chaplain of Hawys, Lady of La Pole, attended in the choir of the conventual church of Alberbury, and for himself and the other chaplains celebrating at Botynton, swore canonical obedience to the Bishop of Hereford.[2] The controversy over the disputed *villes* of the Gordowr was re-opened in 1289, when that militant churchman, John de la Pole (son of the late prince), who was Rector of the church of La Pole, together with the Vicar, Griffith ab Ednyved, made an unsuccessful attempt to recover their spiritual rights over these *villes*, the tithes of which were then in the possession of the Prior of Alberbury.[3]

OWEN, the last Prince of Upper Powys, did not live very many years in the enjoyment of his possessions;

[1] In order to insure the peaceful possession of their lands beyond Severn, the family of Griffith were constrained to hold the manor of Buttington for a knight's fee, of the Lords of Caus.

[2] Archdeacon Thomas's *St. Asaph*, pp. 43-4.

[3] The tithes of Buttington, Hope, and Trewern now belong to the Vicar of Pool and to the Appropriators of the Rectory (Christ Church, Oxford).

he died in 1293. This prince was a benefactor to our borough so far as to grant certain commons to the burgesses for their use and profit. These commons were enclosed in 1761, and the greater part of this enclosure is the property of the burgesses up to the present day.

Owen had married Joanna, daughter of Sir Robert Corbet of Wattlesborough, and by her he had two children, GRIFFITH and HAWYS, who were about two or three years of age at his death.

We have now come to an end of the era of the Celtic rulers of Powys-land, and we are about to enter into a new epoch, that of the Anglo-Norman lords of Powys. The finishing stroke in the downfall of Welsh autonomy was performed by Owen de la Pole himself. At a Parliament held at Shrewsbury in 1283, he surrendered to King Edward the castle and town of La Pole and all his other lands, and received them back again under the name and tenure of free baronage of England, on resigning to the King and his heirs, and to the Crown of England, the name and crown of a prince (*nomen et circulum principatus*).[1]

The last hope of the men of Gwynedd to regain for their princes the throne of Wales was ruthlessly crushed out at the battle which occurred upon the Long Mountain in the summer of 1295. The last champion of Gwynedd was MADOC ab Meredith, a kinsman of Llewelyn, the late Prince of Wales. His rebellion assumed such serious proportions that it was the means of stopping the English King from setting out for his expedition to Gascony. In the June of that year we find Edward hastening to the scene of insurrection. On the 19th he was at Clun. On the 21st he had passed on to Welsh Pool, sleeping that night at the Abbey, and next morning (June 22nd) he set out for Oswestry, *en route* for Conway. Madoc had already defeated the English army at Denbigh, and had

[1] Nichols' *Collectanea* (quoted, *Mont. Coll.*, vol. i, p. 51).

marched southward, taking Oswestry upon his way, and defeating John l'Estrange at Knockyn. His overthrow was effected early in July upon the heights of Cefn Digoll. With his capture and the dispersal of his forces the rebellion came to an end. Gwynedd's eclipse became complete when the Church intervened, and placed both Madoc and his fellow-patriots under her ban. It was from the altar-steps of St. Mary's at Pool that formal sentence of excommunication was pronounced against the hapless prince. With this incident may be said to terminate the closing scene in the history of independent and self-governing Wales.

In Madoc's tent the clarion sounds,
  With rapid clangor hurried far;
Each hill and dale the note rebounds,
  But when return the sons of war?
Thou, born of stern Necessity,
  Dull Peace! the valley yields to thee,
And owns thy melancholy sway.—*Sir Walter Scott.*

Chapter VIII.

FEUDAL TIMES.

We have now reached the fourteenth century, and likewise the beginning of a new epoch. The period we are thus about to enter commences with the advent of the De Cherletons, the family who, through their alliance by marriage with the last surviving heiress of the House of Cynvyn, had established themselves at the Castle of La Pole, and who now ruled the people of Powys with a heavy hand by means of their Norman garrison; thus treating their territory as if it had come to them by force of arms, instead of by the peaceful means of a marriage dower. Some excuse perhaps may be made for the Anglo-Norman lords of La Pole for their methods of government in their new home, considering that they had under them a proud and

imaginative race, whose memories were continually harping back to the glorious days of national independence, and to the deeds of prowess of their ancient princes; furthermore, there were still chieftains living in Wales who had a better title to the patrimony of Powys than they themselves had, and who had given, and were giving, no little trouble and anxiety by putting forward their claims in a particularly aggressive manner—as witness the deeds of Griffith de la Pole, Owen Glyndwr, and Sir Griffith Vaughan. These considerations show us that we must not judge the conduct of the Anglo-Norman barons too harshly, nor should we criticise them from a nineteenth-century standpoint alone.

The "feudal" era did not end when the De Cherletons disappeared from Powys-land, and under their successors, the Greys, the Tiptofts, and the Suttons, the same villeinarian wrongs and racial troubles continued, until a brighter day dawned for our town and neighbourhood (as well as for other portions of Wales), when a Welsh line of princes had been at length established upon the English (British) throne, and Wales had been placed, so far as law and justice and representation were concerned, upon a level with her "predominant partner", England. This latter event almost synchronises with the death of the last "feudal" Baron of Powys (1552), which, of course, brings us to the end of the period we are dealing with in this chapter.

Up to the present chapter this local history has been, to a certain extent, constructive;[1] but the ground we are now about to enter upon has been already so entirely covered, in a past history of the town and borough,[2] that the author, henceforward, will be entirely

[1] The author has not been able to discover any continuous record of the annals of Mid-Wales. It seems strange that a *Powysian Chronicle* has never been written!

[2] *Materials for a History of Welshpool Borough and Parish*, by the late Mr. Morris C. Jones, F.S.A. This history, as a continuous record, commences with Griffith ab Gwenwynwyn's charter.

indebted for his data to the valuable papers compiled and elaborated by the late learned editor of the *Montgomeryshire Collections;* and so, in the future pages of this work, he will content himself with portraying the more remarkable incidents that occurred within the limits of the town or around the walls of its ancient castle, leaving the recital of Charters and Inventories, and other documents, and the genealogical complications of the Powys Castle families, to the volumes of the Powys-land Club's publications.[1]

Griffith, son of Owen de la Pole, died in the June of 1309, at the early age of nineteen, and the Castle of La Pole and its dependent manors came into the hands of a young girl, Griffith's sister, HAWYS "GADARN", who at that time was scarcely eighteen years of age. In the same year (on August 26th) she was married, through the influence of Edward II, to a Shropshire magnate, JOHN DE CHERLETON, who by her right acquired the feudal Barony of Powys, held *in capite* of the English crown, together with the "Castell de la Pole". Sir John was summoned to Parliament, July 26th, 1313, as "Dominus Powys", and from that time until his death in 1353 he took a leading part in the military and parliamentary transactions of the kingdom. In the year following his marriage, we find him, in conjunction with his uncle-in-law, GRIFFITH DE LA POLE, Lord of Deytheur, ordered to raise 400 soldiers out of Powys-land for the King's service in Scotland. In 1314 he was required to raise another levy of 500 men; again, in 1317, 300 men, and in 1319, 500 men. In 1322 he was in arms against the King at the *Battle of Boroughbridge*, after which he surrendered himself, but managed to regain the confidence of his sovereign in 1326, after having raised another large levy at the royal command—in these frequent military writs being sometimes described as *le Seigneur de Powis.*

[1] *Mont. Coll.*, vol. i, and successive volumes.

Sir John's contribution to our local history, considering his long tenure of the Castle, is somewhat meagre. He initiated an Anglicising policy in his new territory, which culminated in 1328, when he caused all the Welsh brethren at Strata Marcella to be supplanted by English monks, doubtless in order to have friendly occupants of the Abbey rather than hostile ones. He granted certain privileges to the townspeople, including a new charter—wherein he is described as "Lord of La Pole"—and the liberty to apprehend all felons and fugitives found within the limits of the borough. He also entirely rebuilt the castle, leaving it (allowing for many alterations and additions) in the state we find it at the present day.

According to Powel, Yorke, and other authorities,[1] the reason for the Lady Hawys receiving the title of *Gadarn* ("the Hardy") was her resolute defence of her hereditary rights when called upon to resist the claims of her uncles, who, one and all, questioned the eligibility of a woman to succeed to the family dignities. The ungallant conduct of these uncles brought to her assistance the King himself, who gave her in marriage to one of his squires (the afore-mentioned Sir John), and thus bestowed upon the forlorn damsel a natural protector.

No documentary proof can be adduced for this statement of the Welsh historians, although plenty of proof can be brought forward, from contemporary documents, showing that the claims of Hawys and her husband to the castle and title of Powys were hotly contested by one at least of the uncles De la Pole—by Griffith, the doughty Lord of Deytheur. The outcome of the dispute was civil war, which broke out with considerable fury in Powys. Matters came to a head in 1312, when Griffith, "with a great power of the Welsh", laid siege to the castle, Sir John and the Lady Hawys being within its walls at the time. The

[1] Powel, *Hist. of Wales*, p. 215; Yorke, *Royal Tribes*, p. 78; Llwyd, p. 176.

beleaguered garrison held out bravely, but the assault was protracted and severe, and the castle was on the point of surrender when timely succour arrived: Roger de Mortimer was despatched by the King to the relief of the castle, having under him a formidable force. In consequence of this intervention, the siege was raised, and Griffith's army driven off. In the spring of 1316 hostilities, as fierce as ever, broke out between the contending parties. At last a royal order came calling upon both sides to lay down their arms, under penalty of forfeiture, and citing each party to appear at Westminster and lay their case before the King's council. De Cherleton obeyed this mandate, and placed himself unreservedly in the King's hands; but the implacable Griffith continued in his depredations, until the Sheriff of Shropshire was despatched to him in order to make known, for a second time, the contents of the former mandate. The Sheriff returned, reporting that he had failed to find Griffith either in the town and suburbs of La Pole, or elsewhere in the bailiwick; but that he had found him at his manor of Deytheur, and had notified to him the contents of the King's writ; and he further stated, that before leaving Welsh Pool he had notified the same to the Lord of Deytheur's *locum tenens* there, Philip de Smethcote.[1] Griffith did not appear, either in person or by his attorney, so judgment against him apparently went by default. The desultory contest between the two factions continued until 1330, when the King commanded a general disarmament on both sides—an order which brought about the desired effect.

John and Hawys are supposed to have been buried at Shrewsbury—in the foundation that they themselves had enriched, the Grey Friars' Church. An inscription under the figure of Sir John de Cherleton,

[1] Griffith de la Pole owned the manor of Longnor, in Shropshire, which contained the parish of Smethcote. The manor he sold, on purpose to raise money for the carrying on of his campaign against De Cherleton.

in a window of St. Mary's Church, Shrewsbury, asks the passer-by to pray for "Monsieur John de Cherleton, who caused this glazing to be made, and for Dame Hawyse, his *companion*": this unusual term signifying a union with royalty.

The castle and barony devolved for three generations in the direct line, after Sir John's death in 1353.

Five years before the first De Cherleton's decease—in 1348—occurred the Black Death, a pestilence which swept away *one-half* of the population of England and Wales, and may be described as the central fact of the reign of Edward III, and of the fourteenth century; indeed, in the opinion of some writers, the most important economic fact in modern history. Among its consequences may be reckoned an immense advance in the social condition of the working-classes, owing to the scarcity of labour, and the consequent increase in its value as a commodity; the substitution of what we should call tenant-farming for landlord occupation—and resulting at last in the emancipation of the English and Welsh peasantry.[1] No local incidents connected with this awful visitation have, as yet, been brought to light, so we can only advert to the general—as distinguished from the local—features of this universal cataclysm.

We have to pass on to the opening years of the fifteenth century. In 1400 we find JOHN DE CHERLETON IV, Lord of Powys, granting leave to the burgesses of Welsh Pool to erect a prison in their town for the purpose of incarcerating "all malefactors and rebels found within the said town, and for those without in the franchise of the same taken". This document, after giving various details of the site, arrangements, etc., of the prison, proceeds to say that, "should anyone be taken within our said town for any heinous offence affecting our person, our heirs or our rights of our lordship, that such malefactors be led

[1] Warburton's *Edward III*, p. 130.

forthwith to our castle, these our letters of warranty notwithstanding." This document is very significant: showing the disaffected state of Powys-land at that time.

It may be truly said that all Wales was in a state of ferment at that very moment. We are now in the days of OWEN GLYNDWR, and that gallant patriot had already risen in arms against the unjust extortions and the grinding tyranny of the Marcher-lords, who held sway over the fairest and richest districts in the Cymric Fatherland. Thousands of the Cymry had flocked to his banner, and the tide of revolt was spreading to every corner of the land. In a series of brilliant successes, Glyndwr had made himself master of most of the Welsh strongholds; and it seemed as if English interests in Wales were beginning to totter, as if in anticipation of their final downfall. The rebellion spread into Powys-land—that ancient patrimony of Glyndwr's own family[1]—and within the limits of the province the Welsh leader exerted his first act of royalty, when, after calling together the states of the Principality, he met them in parliament at Machynlleth, and at that Parliament was crowned Prince of Wales.[2] This event occurred on September 2nd, 1402. Welsh hopes and aspirations were now at their zenith, and the tide of success was still flowing when the national army—

> . . . . . from the banks of Wye,
> And sandy-bottomed Severn, sent their foes
> Bootless home, and weather-beaten back.
> Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, Act iii.

Although Glyndwr had experienced a reverse from the Lord of Powys in the year before (June 4th, 1401), he still had a large following about the environs of the

[1] Owen Glyndwr belonged to the Royal Tribe of Cynvyn, being lineally descended from Griffith II, last Prince of Powys Vadoc.

[2] The Parliament-house at Machynlleth still exists. The new corporate seal of that town represents Glyndwr presiding over the Parliament.

town and castle of La Pole: chiefest among them being SIR GRIFFITH VAUGHAN of Garth (a descendant of Brochwel and likewise of Gwenwynwyn), and his brother Ieuan—neither of them being more than mere youths at the time, but both entering into the national cause with all the enthusiasm of their young manhood. It was in 1402 that the Welsh leader and his followers marched through Powys-land to the mountains of Plynlumon, from whence they made plundering excursions, and were the terror of all who declined to espouse their cause. The territory of John de Cherleton suffered terribly, and it was on this occasion, probably, that the suburbs of Welsh Pool were burnt by Glyndwr, who, it is said,[1] at the same time, made an attack upon the castle, but was compelled to retire without effecting an entrance into its impregnable walls.

On August 5th of that year Lord Powys[2] wrote a letter to the Council, dated from the "Castell de la Pole", deploring the state to which the neighbourhood had been reduced by the rebellion then raging, and praying "that the garrisons might be furnished with men-at-arms and archers". Whether this letter received the attention of the Council or no, we are not informed.

In 1404, on August 30th, the Council gave permission to the county of Salop to make a truce for the country of Wales until the end of November, and the King also assented to the Lord of Powys making the like truce for his castle of La Pole.[3]

The document that we are now about to notice was, and still is, one of considerable importance to Welsh Pool. It is the charter of June 29th, 1406, whereby EDWARD DE CHERLETON extended the privileges of the

[1] There is very slight testimony to prove that the castle was ever attacked by Glyndwr, yet it seems altogether probable that such was the case.

[2] John de Cherleton IV had lately died, and his brother Edward was now in possession of the title and the castle.

[3] *Proceedings of Council* (quoted, *Mont. Coll.*, vol. vii, p. 343).

burgesses, enlarged the boundaries of the Borough to its present great area, and granted the burgesses certain immunities. In the text of the charter the Lord of Powys states his reasons for thus conferring these fresh favours: the keynote to the whole transaction being contained in these significant words:—"Because they (the burgesses), ... in the time of the Rebellion of Owen ab Griffith,[1] were always faithful to our Sovereign Lord the King, and to us." Perhaps it was their fidelity to the English crown that caused Glyndwr to burn the suburbs of the town; and because of the sufferings they endured by this wanton act, Edward de Cherleton was prompted to recompense them after this fashion. This charter was issued "apud castrum nostrum de Pola".

BOROUGH OF WELSH POOL.

The text of this charter is given, together with a translation, in *Montgomeryshire Collections* (vol. vii, pp. 343 *et seq.*), so there will be no need to repeat it in these pages; but we will merely give the definition of the municipal boundaries, as contained in section 3 of the charter; chiefly because of its historic interest—especially in the light of recent events.[2]

And moreover we grant to the burgesses aforesaid, and to their heirs and successors, for us and our heirs, for the enlargement of the liberty of our town aforesaid, and for the use of our said burgesses for their great fidelity aforesaid, that they may have within their liberty: To wit from the town of La Pole aforesaid, to the brook which is called Helygy, and so going round to the outward bounds

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[1] Owen Glyndwr.

[2] *Vide*, The proceedings of the Montgomeryshire County Council, at their sessions in 1894, and likewise the proceedings of the Government Inquiry at Welsh Pool, March 27th, 1895, *re* the municipal boundaries of Welsh Pool.

of the churchyard of the church of Castle Kereignion, and thence by Dolarthun to a certain grange[1] of the Abbot of Strata Marcella at Moydoc, and from thence by Wenallt to Guldesfeld Park, and from thence to the river called Belee, and so going round to a certain windmill of the aforesaid Abbot, and so by the grange called Eskybor Vawr to Severn,[2] and so beyond Severn through the bounds of our lordship of Powys-land on that side of Severn.[3]

Among the names of assenting burgesses who appear as co-signatories of this important document are the following: viz., Hugh Say (Captain of Pool garrison, a cadet of the family of De Say, Barons of Clun), Sir Griffith Vaughan of Garth (an ancestor of the Myttons of Garth, and of the Lloyds of Marrington: Glyndwr's quondam ally), Evan Blayney of Tregynon (of the Tribe of Brochwel: an ancestor of the Blayneys of Gregynog), Owen ap Meredith of Neuadd Wen (of the Royal Tribe of Griffith ap Cynan), and Howel, David, and Madoc ap David Aber (Grandsons of Ieuan Caereinion, the ancestor of the Owens of Llynlloedd, Woodhouse and Bettws).

The late editor of the *Montgomeryshire Collections* has given a very good explanation why the borough thus received such an extraordinary accession of territory at this time. These are his words:—

The extension of the boundaries of the Borough was made for the "enlargement of the liberty of the town", and to benefit the burgesses "for their great fidelity". The Borough being clearly in the main an English garrison,[4] was surrounded by the rebellious followers of Owen Glyndwr; it is probable the enlargement of the liberties was really to extend the area over which the garrison of Pool had the charge, and, perhaps, for defensive and strategical purposes—the river Helygy (Luggy) on one side, the Belee on another, and the Severn on

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[1] Ysgubor Goch, in the township of Sylvaen.

[2] The site of Ysgubor Vawr is at Varchoel.

[3] This latter refers to Buttington, Hope and Trewern—which are "beyond Severn".

[4] The ancient borough merely contained the two *villes* of Pool Town and Welsh Town—both the abbey and the castle being outside the bounds. The manor called *Pool Borough*, in the Barony of Powis, only comprises "Pool Town" (otherwise called the "Middle Division).

a third side, may have been regarded as boundaries of defence from the incursions of the rebels; but it was not easy to see the reason for extending the boundary beyond the Severn, unless it were to impose on the burgesses the duty of defending the lord's possessions on the English side of Severn. Doubtless the lord relied mainly upon the burgesses for furnishing him with men as well for defensive as offensive purposes. In addition to the motive of defence above alluded to, the extension of the boundary may have been to include the possessions of the Abbey of Ystrad Marchell, viz., the abbey itself, the land and manor of Tir-y-mynach adjoining, and partly in the parish of Guilsfield, and also the grange at Moydog and land at Trehelig, which are situate in the parish of Castle Caereinion, and the lands called Monksfield.

So far as Powys-land was concerned the national movement had subsided in 1409, and in the years following we find the Lord of Powys granting several letters of pardon to those of his tenants and burgesses who had been "out" with Owen Glyndwr. The letter dated from La Pole on January 12th, 1411, gives the names of the lord's retinue :—

David Holbach, our Seneschal of Powys.
Matthew ap Ieuan, his *locum tenens.*
Willielmus Piers, our Receiver.
Hugo Say, our Constable, captain of our castle.
Peter Barbour, our Chaplain.

In 1415 Owen was dead and all his followers dispersed. It was in that year that *Agincourt* was fought, which brought much fame to a local chieftain, Sir Griffith Vaughan of Garth, who was created a knight-banneret on the field, receiving this marked honour at the hands of his sovereign HENRY V.

In 1417, SIR JOHN OLDCASTLE, Lord Cobham, the celebrated Lollard, being pursued by the King with great perseverance, fled to Powys-land, to a secluded dell called Pant Mawr, upon the Broniarth hills, and immediately outside the new municipal boundary. The King had issued a proclamation offering a reward of 1,000 marks to anyone who would apprehend Oldcastle; and therein it was stipulated that "any town or city which caused him to be seized should be free from paying all tenths and fifteenths, or other

taxes, and should on all occasions enjoy the benefit of the King's special favour". Under these circumstances, piety, patriotism, and cupidity moved the Lord of Powys to aspire to the glory of arresting the fugitive. Finding where he lay hid, De Cherleton, together with Sir Griffith Vaughan and his brother, having with them a strong guard, came to Broniarth for the purpose of arresting him.

> But God is with me in this wilderness,
> These wet black passes and foam-churning chasms;
> And God's free air, and hope of better things.
> I would I knew their speech; not now to glean,
> Not now—I hope to do it—some scatter'd ears,
> Some ears for Christ in this wild field of Wales.
>
> Tennyson's *Sir John Oldcastle.*

Oldcastle bravely defended himself, and wounded several of those who tried to seize him. At last a rabble gathering about him he was overpowered, and being hurt in the leg he fell, after receiving many wounds. He was forthwith seized and pinioned, and led off to Pool Castle, where he was detained as a prisoner of State. Upon being apprised of the capture, Parliament at once despatched SIR JOHN GREY to Pool to bring the prisoner to London. Sir John came, and carried out his mission. Oldcastle was brought before Parliament on December 18th; from thence he was led away to suffer death, and was hung as a traitor and burned as a heretic.

This visit of Sir John Grey to Pool Castle led to a romantic *dénouément.* Having met there Joan, Lord Powys' eldest daughter, then a young and beautiful girl of seventeen, the gallant knight fell in love with her, and shortly afterwards the two were married. But their married life, alas! was a brief one, for, in 1421, Sir John fell fighting by the side of the Duke of Clarence at the *Battle of Beaugé,* in France. Both bodies were brought over to England for interment, and Sir John was buried with his wife's ancestors in the parish church of Pool. A contemporary Welsh bard

speaks of the piteous grief of the young widow, as she witnessed her husband's body being lowered into the vault :—

> So feeble was she that she swooned ;
> Uttered a scream with voice so loud,
> That it echoed through the chancel of Trallwng.[1]

Edward de Cherleton left no son to succeed him when he died in 1421, so his two daughters inherited. His elder daughter was JOAN, the widow of Sir John Grey, and the younger was JOYCE, who married Sir John Tiptoft. The title of *Powys*, and the castle with its dependent manors, then, were held in coparcenary by these two ladies. Their stepmother, Lady Eleanor of Powys, moreover, held a share of her late husband's possessions, which, upon her subsequent marriage with John de Sutton, Baron Dudley, still continued to be held by her; indeed, the Tiptoft moiety of Powys eventually fell to the Dudley family, but before the feudal barons had altogether disappeared, the castle had come into the sole possession of the Greys. In or about the year 1544, Leland, in his *Itinerary*, makes note of this fact: "The Walshe Pole had two Lord Marchers Castles within one wall, the Lord Powis naimed Grey, and the Lord Dudly callyd Sutton, but now the Lord Powys hathe both in his hand. The Lord Duddeley parte is almost fallen downe."

In 1447 a foul murder was committed within the castle walls, the victim being none other than the chivalrous Sir Griffith Vaughan, "the knight of Agincourt", who, having incurred the fierce hatred of HENRY GREY, Earl of Tanquerville[2] and Lord of Powys, was inveigled by that crafty nobleman into his castle (by means of a safe-conduct given to him), and, when safely within the walls of the castle, he was seized and then

[1] Translation.

[2] Henry Grey, Earl of Tanquerville (in France) and Lord of Powys, married Antigone, base daughter of Humphrey Plantagenet, Duke of Gloucester. In 1448 he granted a charter to the burgesses of Llanfyllin.

put to death by decapitation. The brave old knight's body was afterwards buried by his friends in St. Mary's Church.

> Lie not in thy grave of stones
> In St. Mary's chancel, my worthy friend.
> *Davydd Llwyd* (Trans.).

Henry Grey is supposed to have committed this cruel and treacherous act because the knight of Garth, in addition to being a near and powerful neighbour, was also a direct descendant of the native princes of Powys, and perhaps had ofttimes menaced this lord's precarious tenure of the Barony. One authority,[1] however, states that Sir Griffith fell a victim to the same political intrigue and combinations which brought about the death of his friend and patron, Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, in the same year. This, then, would make Sir Griffith the victim of the spirited Margaret of Anjou, the Lancaster Queen—Henry Grey being simply a willing instrument in her hands.

This foul crime caused consternation and disgust throughout the length and breadth of Wales. The bards, Lewis Glyn Cothi and Davydd Llwyd (of Mathavarn), voiced the intense feeling stirred up at the time amongst the men of Powys by this tragic occurrence. These are some heart-stirring lines from the *Elegy* of the latter poet:—[2]

> For the man with the golden collar
> Whom I loved best, the breast is pining.
> If, Griffith Vaughan, thou art alive and well,
> Why dost not thou kindle a fire?
> If thou art, tall hero, unrecorded killed,
> May God avenge thy beauteous brow!
> No man with a wrathful hand could have slain thee,
> Unless he were a fiend inspired with jealousy!
> My friend, I do not counsel
> Reliance on the sign-manual of a Saxon,

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[1] *Mont. Coll.*, vol. ii, pp. 166-7.
[2] Translated by Canon D. Silvan Evans of Llanwrin.

Miserable remnants of Troy![1]
  For ages have we known the perfidy
Of the Saxons—were it not for our madness!
  The head of the Prince of Wales in Builth.
The head of Griffith Vaughan (whose long ruddy
    lance was like the lightning),
  The firm support of his country,
A knight with a brave hero's arm—they cut off!
  A head that could not be sold for pounds,
  A holy head like John the Baptist's;
A fair head even when it was made a present of;
  A head that long gave law to Powys;
A sacred head, the head of an illustrious chief;
  A beautiful head, until he was betrayed.
Was not the safe-conduct execrable,
  When his head was severed in violence?

. . . . . .

It was struck off by the double-tongued earl
    Harry Grey! Long may he hang!

Davydd Llwyd's *Elegy*.

We now pass on to the year 1485. On August 1st of that year an incident occurred which was to be the harbinger of better things for Wales. On that day our distinguished countryman, HENRY TUDOR, landed at Milford with 2,000 French troops, having for his mission the winning of the Crown of England. Henry pursued his course through Haverfordwest and Cardigan until he came to Machynlleth, and spent the night of the 9th at Mathavarn, near that town, the guest of the aged poet Davydd Llwyd. Next day he reached Mallwyd, and from thence he passed over Bwlch-y-fedwen into Caereinion, and at nightfall put up at the ancient mansion of Dolarddun, the residence of the Wynn family, where he was entertained with great hospitality. On the morrow he borrowed a horse from his host, and then passing through the town of Pool he came to the Long Mountain, where (tradition alleges) the French and Welsh armies met, and where all the North Wales chieftains with their forces were awaiting his arrival. From Cefn Digoll, Henry Tudor travelled

[1] The poet refers to the ancient tradition, that their race are descended from the heroes of the *Iliad*.

on through Shrewsbury, Newport, Stafford, Lichfield, Tamworth and Atherstone, until he came to Bosworth; and there, on August 21st, was fought the memorable battle which gave both England and Wales a new race of kings, the House of Tudor.

The power of the feudal barons of Wales and the Marches was broken-up when, in 1536, by the Statute of 27 Henry VIII, cap. 26, the Dominion of Wales was formally annexed to the realm of England, and thirty-one members were added to the House of Commons to represent the counties and boroughs of Wales. Welsh Pool was, with Machynlleth and Llanfyllin,[1] made a contributory borough with Montgomery in the return of a member. At the same time Powys-land (with adjoining lordships) was made into shire-ground, under the name of MONTGOMERYSHIRE. In 1552, Edward Grey, Lord of Powys, died without lawful issue, and thus the barony and feudalism fell together. This brings us to a new and brighter era of our local history —Modern Times.

Before we close this chapter, however, we will proceed to give an excerpt from a cotemporary document which contains some valuable information concerning Powys-land at the time of the break-up of the Marcher Lordships.

And whereas by the ancient laws of Wales there was a court in every commot; so is there in the lordship of Powis now a Court Baron in every of the ancient commots for the said Barony of Powis, as much as now beareth the name, and which came to the part of Jane Charlton, wife of John Gray, consisted in old time of six commots, namely, Caereinion, Mechain Uwchcoed, Mechain Iscoed, Mochnant, Llanerchydol, and Ystrad Marchell, in every of which commots there was of old time an ancient court, and now at this day the Barony of Powis doth consist of these six manors, and called by those names, and known by their ancient bounds, and in each of these is at this day a Court Baron and Leat kept after the use of England.

And this Barony or Lordship of Powis, although it be one of the most royalest, greatest, largest, and best seigniories and Lordship

[1] Newtown and Llanidloes were added afterwards.

Marchers of Wales, yet hath it not any manor or lordship holden of it, as most of the rest of the Lordships Marchers in Wales that were conquered have. The reason is for it was never conquered, whereby the lord had not any occasion to bestow any manors or such gifts upon any of his men that aided them in their conquest. Also, within the said lordship of Powis there is no division of knights' fees, carucats, or ploughlands, or oxlands, being a measure and quantity of land brought first into Wales by the English and Norman lords, and never known to the ancient Welshmen or Britons. The like observation as I have now said of the Barony of Powis shall ye find in the rest of the members that sometime were ancient Powys, as Mowddwy, Kerry, Cedewain, Arwystli, Cyveiliog, Deytheur, Cynllaith Owen, etc. All which, for that they became subject to the Crown of England by submission, and not by conquest, the ancient commots remain entire in bounds, and retain the ancient names, and in every ancient commot now a Court Baron, and not one mesne manor holden of any of them, nor any knights' fees, oxlands, or ploughlands in any of them.[1]

The ancient commots above mentioned, with the exceptions of Mowddwy and Cynllaith Owen, now form the COUNTY OF MONTGOMERY, which also includes the ancient chatellany of Montgomery, and the townships of the Gordowr lying within the lordship of Caurs. The capital of the new shire was fixed at Montgomery; but in a very few years after 1536 the county business had gravitated to Pool, and there it has remained ever since; although, during the present century, Pool has been compelled to share the county work with its growing rival, Newtown.

[1] *Harleian MS.*, 141. The orthography of the original is so full of elisions that the writer has thought it advisable to use the modern form of spelling in this transcription.

Chapter IX.

MODERN TIMES.

With the disappearance of the great Feudaries of Powys-land and the Marches, upon the parcelling-out of these semi-autonomous lordships into counties and hundreds[1] and the introduction of English statute-law in 1536, we at once enter into a fresh stage—the last—of our history. Now, for the first time since the downfall of the Celtic monarchy, the downtrodden Cymry of Wales find themselves upon an equal footing with their English neighbours.

As this history does not attempt to deal with the

[1] The Hundred, being an exotic, did not survive for long as an administrative area in Wales.

annals of the new County of Montgomery, our historical horizon is at once reduced to the limits of the borough-town and castle of Pool.

Not even excepting the privileged Royal Borough of Montgomery it is correct to say that Welsh Pool, alone of all the borough towns of Upper Powys, showed at this period signs of a healthy civic growth, and a promise to survive those many vicissitudes which mark the careers of all the smaller English and Welsh municipalities between the days of the Tudor monarchs and those of the great municipal cataclysm of 1835. The other boroughs — Caersws, Dinas Mawddwy, Llanfyllin, Llanidloes, Machynlleth and Newtown—were then already showing signs of speedy decay; and no attempt, seemingly, was ever made to revive their abeyant privileges and to infuse a proper sense of civic virtues in the minds of their townsmen: although eventually civic affairs took a favourable turn in the case of Llanfyllin and Llanidloes, the other boroughs quietly allowed their privileges of self-government to become extinguished altogether.

In 1570 the burgesses of Pool, in common-hall assembled, passed certain bye-laws, ordained for the government of the Borough, which are expressed in very quaint terms, and are in themselves, in some respects, very curious and remarkable.[1] They are subscribed by no less than fifty-three of the burgesses, and are headed *Apud Polam decimo die Octobris anno Regni Dne. nre. Elizabethæ Dei Gratia,* etc. These bye-laws were confirmed by the Court of the Marches in 1572. In this document for the first time the office of Alderman appears: the other officers mentioned being the Bailiffs, the Recorder or Town Clerk, Sergeants or Catchpoles, and the "whole Cominaltye" or "Comburgesses of the said Towen".

The fact that Pool (as a contributory borough)

[1] The text of the bye-laws is printed in full in *Montgomeryshire Collections*, vol. xiii, pp. 209-12.

possessed the parliamentary franchise now brought about a change in its municipal government which, to say the least, was by no means an unmixed blessing to the townsmen. We now refer to the CHARTER OF INCORPORATION from the Crown—granted by JAMES I in the year 1615. Under the Tudor *régime* these incorporating charters had been thrust upon unwilling boroughs, whereby a process commenced which gradually transferred the power from the burgesses in general to various exclusive bodies within the boroughs, and ultimately produced the gravest and most intolerable abuses, which were not swept away until the year 1835. By thus restricting the franchise, the King and his courtiers were enabled to manipulate the voting power of these "pocket" boroughs for their own purposes.[1] This policy the Stuart kings inherited from their predecessors; and so it came about that King James, without even condescending to ask the burgesses of Pool their feelings in the matter,[2] proceeded to grant a charter to our borough, wherein its burgesses became a body corporate under the title of THE BAILIFFS AND BURGESSES OF THE BOROUGH OF POOLE, IN THE COUNTY OF MONTGOMERY. The charter opens in the following style:—

JAMES, by the Grace of God of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, etc. To all whom these present letters shall come Greeting. Whereas our Borough of Poole, in our County of Montgomery, is an ancient and populous borough, and the bailiffs and burgesses have held, used, and enjoyed divers liberties, franchises and immunities, and pre-eminences, as well by charters of divers Princes of Wales[3] and Lords of the lordship of Powis, to them and their predecessors, heretofore made, granted, and confirmed, as also by means of divers prescriptions, usages, and customs for time immemorial used in the same borough.

We cannot quote this prolix document *in extenso*, for the reason that it already occupies nineteen pages of

[1] Cromwell and his republican ministers were no less unscrupulous in this respect.

[2] Such was the case—in spite of the reciting words of the charter.

[3] A mistake: *Princes of Powys* is intended.

thickly-set type in volume xiii of the *Montgomeryshire Collections*. By an artful omission, no mention is made in this document of the ancient privilege of the burgesses to devolve the civic franchise from father to son; nor is any safeguard given to the townsmen to protect their franchise from being swamped by an infusion of "foreign" burgesses; moreover, the election to the office of burgess could not be effected until each election had been ratified by the Steward of Powys.

The Poolonians bore these restrictions very patiently for over a century; until at last, wearied by the impotence and the exactions of the Corporation, they rose in a body in 1723, expelled an obnoxious member —one George Juckes—from his life-office of Alderman, and then proceeded to take the direction of public business into their own hands by boldly making a clean sweep of all the "foreign" burgesses—seventy-three in number—who had been wrongfully placed upon the "Ile" (the Burgess Roll). This successful *coup* did much to preserve the municipality of Pool from falling into the evil days of its neighbours at Newtown and elsewhere. Curious to relate—the "Tensors' Book" (Corporation Minute Book), which contained the edict of the home-burgesses depriving the "outlanders" of their franchise[1] was either lost or stolen within a year or two of the date of this local revolution. However, the writer of this history was lucky enough to drop across it—in a mutilated form—in the year 1893. It would be interesting to know how it came to pass that the book lay hid for 170 years.

THE DEVOLUTION OF POWYS CASTLE.[2]

THE EARLY HERBERTS OF POWYS.—In 1587 an important event took place: no less than the transfer, by sale, of the Castle of Pool and its

[1] This is the last entry in the book as it now exists. The succeeding *Tensors' Book* commences in 1728.

[2] It seems a pity that a uniform spelling of the name *Powys* has not been adopted. Whilst the name of both castle and earldom is

vast estates from Edward Grey, the "universal legatee" of the last feudal lord, to Sir Edward Herbert, the second son of William, first Earl of Pembroke, and the nephew of Queen Catherine Parr. Dying in 1594, Sir Edward was buried in the chancel of St. Mary's at Pool; and his memory is preserved in that church by a handsome *Jacobean* monument. This scion of the illustrious Cambro-Norman HOUSE OF HERBERT, however, was not the first member of the family who was connected with Powys-land, for a little earlier than his own time two Herberts had successively held the office of Steward of Powys. Sir Edward was succeeded by his son William, who was created BARON POWYS OF POWYS by Charles I in 1629. It was during this peer's time that the great Civil War between King and Parliament broke out; Lord Powys espoused the Royal cause, and suffered greatly in consequence: he was besieged by the Parliamentary forces at the Red Castle of Powys (as it was then called)—this was in 1644—and he was compelled to surrender, and was carried off a prisoner. He died at his lodgings in the Strand, at London, in 1655, and was buried at Hendon. The first lord's son, Percy, now succeeded to the empty title, but the castle and its estates did not come to him until their republican impropriators had quitted them, upon the Restoration in 1660. After a life full of vicissitudes, the second lord died in 1666, and was buried in St. Mary's Church.

THE DUKES OF POWIS.—The second Lord Powys had married Elizabeth Craven, the heiress of Oswestry and its dependent manors, and by her had two children: the eldest, William, succeeded his father in the title and soon became a person of some note in the political world; he was a Roman Catholic, and moreover a staunch friend of the Royal House; for his services Charles II created him EARL OF POWIS in 1674. At the instance of the notorious Titus Oates, the new Earl was impeached of high treason by Parliament in 1679, and in consequence was committed to the Tower of London, where he remained until 1683. When James II came to the throne, he at once rewarded his unfortunate friend by making him MARQUIS OF POWIS AND VISCOUNT MONTGOMERY; and afterwards, on January 12, 1689, William Herbert became DUKE OF POWIS.[1] When James fled to France, the "honest and moderate Powys" (as Macaulay calls him) resolutely shared the fortunes of his Royal master, and became his faithful minister at St. Germains. The first duke died an exile in Paris in 1696. With his last breath he pathetically inquired whether

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now invariably spelt P-o-w-*i*-s, yet the modern historians with one accord spell the name P-o-w-*y*-s when they are dealing with the province or barony.

[1] James II, on his flight, dropped the Great Seal into the Thames (December 11, 1688). A month later (January 12, 1689), by letters patent, *sub magno sigillo nostro*, William Herbert was created "Duke of Powis and Marquis of Montgomery": a new seal in the meanwhile having been made.

he were at Powis Castle or at his house in London; but he little knew that at that very time an act of attainder had been passed against him; that he was an outlaw; and that Powis Castle and the estates had been confiscated by the new Government. The Castle and Barony of Powis was granted by William III in 1696 to a brother-Dutchman, Lord Rochefort; and so, once more, the ancient fortress of Cadogan ab Bleddyn passed into alien hands.

The first Duke's kinsman and fellow-Jacobite, the wily Roger Palmer, Earl of Castlemaine, bowed before the storm and stayed in England; he died at Oswestry in 1705, and at his own desire was buried "in the parish church of Pole (Pool), near my uncle Powis and others of my mother's family." Macaulay draws Castlemaine's character in unmeasured terms of condemnation, but gives a very interesting account of his embassy to the Pope.

The second Duke of Powis, like his father, was a warm partisan of the exiled Stuarts, and became implicated in the 1715 Rebellion—for which he suffered imprisonment in the Tower. It was indeed lucky for our Duke that no more extreme measures were taken against him; for his brother-in-law, William Maxwell, Lord Nithsdale, had sentence of death passed upon him; and this sentence would undoubtedly have been carried out had not his devoted wife (Lady Winifred Herbert) and her maid—the brave Welsh Pool girl, Grace Evans[1]—at the peril of their own lives, bravely rescued him from the Tower, upon the eve of his execution. In 1722 milder counsels prevailed with the Government, and so the Dutch Rochefort received notice to quit, and the Duke forthwith took possession of his patrimony. He died in 1745.

The third Duke of Powis succeeded his father, but he only lived three years to enjoy the family title and estates. Upon his death without issue in 1748, the dukedom became extinct.

THE EARLS OF POWIS, FIRST CREATION.—The last Duke bequeathed the Castle and its estates to a distant kinsman, Henry Arthur, Lord Herbert of Chirbury. The Montgomery—or Chirbury—Herberts, who became possessed of the castle, could claim descent through Magdalen Newport (the mother of the poet George Herbert) from the De la Poles, the original possessors of the Castle and Barony of Powys, and therefore to Cadogan—or, rather, to Cadogan's brother, Meredith ab Bleddyn, Prince of Powys: and so once more the Lords of Powys were able to claim descent from the Royal Tribe of Bleddyn ab Cynvyn.

Henry Arthur Herbert married Barbara, the niece of the last Duke, in 1751, and in the same year was created EARL OF POWIS. He was succeeded in the title by his son, George Edward Henry Arthur, who, dying unmarried in 1801, the estates passed to his sister, Lady Henrietta Antonia.

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[1] Grace Evans' cottage is still to be seen at Pool. It is situated between St. Mary's and the Powys-land Museum.

THE EARLS OF POWIS, SECOND CREATION.—Lady Henrietta Antonia married Edward, Lord Clive, a son of the Conqueror of India. In 1804 Lord Clive was created EARL OF POWIS, and his son and heir (grandfather to the present Earl) subsequently adopted the surname and arms of Herbert. Because of our limited space, we reserve an account of the later Earls of Powis for another occasion.

The most recent event of any importance connected with the history of the Castle was the grand ball given (on October 24th, 1893) within its walls to the principal tenants of the Barony by the Earl and Countess of Powis, to celebrate the birth of their heir, Viscount Clive.

We must now carry our history back to the blood-stirring days of King and Parliament.

Upon two occasions did Charles I visit this country during the course of the Civil War. Upon the first occasion, in 1642, he is said to have visited Powis Castle; but the statement rests on a somewhat slight basis, viz., the testimony of an old MS. at the Castle, which says, *inter alia*, that "It happened in the course of the Civil War that King Charles came with his army to Welshpool, and Lord Powis then had the honour of receiving under his roof his injured Sovereign." Undoubtedly the loyal William Herbert caused the Castle to be specially prepared in order to receive the King: which to the present day is seen in "King Charles' Room", with its superb canopied bed, fenced off by a balustrade, and decorated with the royal monogram, "C. R.". Two years later, in 1644,[1] the King probably passed through a corner of the borough on his way from Llandysilio to Ludlow. Upon the very day that Charles set out from Llandysilio (September 30th), the Parliamentary forces began the investment of Powis Castle.

In the August of 1644 a sharp encounter took place between the combating forces in the streets of Welsh Pool. After Prince Rupert's arrival at Shrewsbury, soon after the defeat at *Marston Moor*, he forwarded a body of cavalry on to the town. Upon the Parlia-

[1] On Sept. 19th the King was at Newtown. On the 22nd he was at Llanfyllin.

mentary Generals, Col. Mytton and Sir Thomas Middleton, hearing of this move on the part of the Prince, they at once joined forces together and advanced upon Pool, having with them 550 horse and foot. They gained the town early in the morning of Aug. 5th. Although Prince Rupert's own regiment of horse was stationed here at the time, under the command of Sir Thomas Dallison, and probably the Royalist forces were really in excess of the enemy's strength, yet the attack was so well-timed that the Royalists were completely taken by surprise; and in the encounter that ensued in the streets of the town the Royalists received a decided reverse, being repulsed with considerable loss, the enemy taking about 300 horse and 40 foot soldiers, and Prince Rupert's own Cornet being killed in the engagement. Sir Thomas Dallison made good his escape with only half his clothes on; and when the victorious party searched his quarters they discovered an important letter in his breeches' pocket, dated August 4th, addressed to the Prince. It is said that while the Roundheads were here on this occasion, they took the opportunity of destroying the Market-house (then in the middle of Broad Street), and likewise the ancient organ, which was in the rood-loft of the parish church.

At the commencement of the war, Lord Powis had at once thrown himself heart and soul into the Royal cause; and, to show his act of adhesion, he forthwith hoisted the royal standard upon the great tower of the Castle, and took command of the garrison in person. It was on September 30th, 1644, that Sir Thomas Middleton advanced from Montgomery to Pool with 300 cavalry and 100 foot, and upon the same day he invested the Castle. Upon the night of October 2nd the besieging party commenced the attack. It was a moonlight night, so the master-gunner and his men waited for the moon's going down. Then, at two o'clock in the early morning of the 3rd, the slumbering garrison and the sleepy watch were rudely awakened

by the firing of a petard and the sudden bursting-open of the iron gates. The attacking party made a rush through the shattered gates, and, after a sharp encounter with those of the garrison on duty, took the Castle by storm, and made prisoners of Lord Powis, his brother and sons, and the chaplain, and three captains, a lieutenant, together with eighty officers and men. If those on duty had displayed a little more watchfulness, it was estimated (by the Roundheads) that the Castle would have held out for a whole year against 10,000 assailants. This was the last occasion upon which this ancient fortress suffered capture at the hands of an enemy.

With the downfall of the Monarchy came the temporal overthrow of the Church. In 1650 the "Rump Parliament" sent down to Wales a commission, consisting of Captains Vavasor Powell,[1] Walter Cradock, and John Williams, and placed soldiers at their command, in order to expel the parochial clergy, together with the bishops and other dignitaries, and, at the same time, in order "to gather churches from among the elect." This notorious Act was entitled *The Propagation of the Gospel in Wales.* At Welsh Pool the Vicar at that time was WILLIAM LANGFORD, a scholarly man, and one about whom even his enemies spoke kindly. Although his churchmanship was not of the highest order, yet it was his fate to be thrust out of his living by the Parliamentary Commissioners in the year 1650. According to his will, even before that date he had been "sometimes deprived, sometimes sequestered. according as Mr. Valvasor Powell dictated to ye Committees." At the Restoration (1660) he returned to Pool, and there he found "my Lord Powis and his lady had detained the tithes, both of Pool and Buttington, from the owners thereof." Upon his return he did not at once resume the Public Liturgy in the

[1] This worthy is supposed to have turned the *Wishing Stone*, "and other objects of superstition", out of the parish church.

church, but waited until the *Act of Uniformity* had become law before doing this. There is a stone tablet to his memory in St. Mary's, with a Latin inscription to this effect: "Near to the altar lies buried the body of William Langford, M.A., Vicar of this church." The redoubtable VAVASOR POWELL, Independent Preacher and Parliamentary captain, appears to have resided for some time, during the days of the Commonwealth, at the "Red Castle", and within its walls both he and his brother-Independent, Ambrose Mostyn, were wont to preach.[1] Another celebrated man at this time (and a native of Pool) was RICHARD DAVIES the Quaker, a man of marked ability, and commanding a remarkable influence over those with whom he came into contact. During his career he suffered cruel persecution at the hands of both churchmen and separatists, which are recounted in the quaint and interesting autobiography which he left behind him.

Richard Davies states in his book that he had been brought up in the "religion and discipline of the Church of England", but that afterwards he became a disciple of Vavasor Powell. In 1658, however, he broke away from Independency and joined the Quakers. Shortly afterwards (probably in 1660), he informs us, his parents made an effort to divert him from his new principles: "My parents were much concerned about me. I was informed that the priest, W. Langford, went to them and told them that I was become distracted, and that they should see for some learned men or man to come to me and restore me to my senses. . . . . The next day, being the first day of the week, when I heard the bells ring, it came upon me to go to the steeple-house,[2] to visit that priest that had told my father I was gone distracted; and when he was at his worship, I went to my own seat to my father (there was no common prayer read then to the people as part

[1] There used to be a chapel in the Castle. Probably it was in this chapel that Powell and Mostyn would hold their religious assemblies.

[2] St. Mary's Church is meant by this.

of their worship in those days); there I sat still till he had done, and when he had done what he had then to say, I stood up and told him that he might do well to stay and make good the doctrine that he had preached that day if he could, and if I was distracted, as he reported, that he may labour to restore me to my right senses. But I spoke but a little while ere I was taken away to prison."

Curious to relate, Richard Davies found in after-years the kindest of friends and protectors in the Roman Catholic Percy Herbert, Lord Powis.

During the time of the Commonwealth the Castle was strongly garrisoned, and was under the command of a governor appointed by Parliament.[1] A decree of the Council of State, dated April 28th, 1660, ordered the demolition of the outworks and the making of breaches in the walls, in order to make it indefensible in case of any future insurrection. These orders had scarcely been carried out before the Restoration of Charles II had taken place, and the consequent return of the Castle's rightful owners.

In 1684 the Duke of Beaufort, as Lord President of Wales, made a "progress" through Wales in almost regal state. He visited Powis Castle on Saturday, July 19th, and held a court there in truly kingly fashion. On the Sunday he attended divine service in state at Pool parish church, being "accompanied by the Earl of Worcester, Sir John Talbot, and a great number of knights, militia officers and gentlemen, besides the officers of his family . . . . the militia foot, with their respective officers, makeing a guard for his passing and returne through ye towne." After which, a sumptuous banquet was given to the notabilities attending—strange to say, neither Lord nor Lady Powis were present. The Duke was again at the Castle on July 31st, when he met his duchess, together with "the

[1] The Parliamentary governor of Powis Castle was Colonel Hugh Price (of the Royal Tribe of Elystan Glodrudd).

Marchioness of Worcester, and other noble ladys, his Grace's daughters, with four coaches and six horses and attendants suitable. Here were noble entertainments repeated, and their Graces rested the day following, being Aug. 1st, 1684."

With the return of the second Duke of Powis from exile in 1722, the days of political and religious upheavals may be said to have come to a close, and our good old town and its ancient Castle began to settle themselves down for a peaceful old age. We have at length reached the "piping times of peace".

For, see, the martial vision fails;
The glimmering spears are seen no more;
The shouts of war die on the gales,
Or sink in Severn's lonely roar.
For chiefs, intent on bloody deed,
And Vengeance, shouting o'er the slain,
Lo! highborn Beauty rules the steed,
Or graceful guides the silken rein.

Sir Walter Scott.

Although a certain amount of progress, both social and moral, was made during the days of the eighteenth century, yet, during the course of that century, local affairs may be said to have been in a state of stagnation, and Welsh Pool soon became a veritable "sleepy hollow": busying itself only with the petty affairs of the Parish or the Corporation, and generally failing to perform any such heroic or picturesque actions that would tempt the pen of anyone writing a *general* (apart from a *parochial*) history of the locality. And can it be wondered at, that the town was in this state of somnolence: when we consider that in this parish (as elsewhere in those days) Church-life was slumbering, for the Church had not yet been awakened by the Evangelical and Catholic revivals which were awaiting her; that civic virtues and obligations were almost unknown among the burgesses, for the Corporation was still an effete body, and was becoming more and more the mouthpiece of a privileged few. Indeed,

there was felt a keen want for a local leader—one who would be in touch with the outside civilised world, and at the same time with the little parochial world at home. Unfortunately for eighteenth-century Welsh Pool, the grand seigniors at the Castle cared very little for local affairs, nor did they spend much of their time at the ancestral home; preferring rather a daily round of business-and-pleasure-combined at London, or the social attractions of Bath and Tunbridge, to the humdrum life of the country. The above, probably, fairly sums up the history of our town during the uneventful days of this much-abused century.

MEMORANDA OF LEADING LOCAL EVENTS DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

In the September of 1824 the Provincial Eisteddfod of Powys was held at Pool. It lasted for three days, and, at the time, was considered a very notable function, being attended by all the principal bards of the Island of Britain, as well as by many of the leading singers and musicians of the day; and its audiences comprising members of most of the great families of Wales. The subject of the *Awdl y Gadair* was "Castell Coch": the winner being Robert Davies, "the Bard of Nantglyn".

The last business of the old unreformed Corporation was to request the Eisteddfod Committee to hand over the balance in their hands—held by them during the preceding ten years—in order that this large sum of money should be applied towards the restoration of the Town Hall. When the *Municipal Corporations Act* came into operation in 1835, the first mayor to be elected was John Davies Corrie, of Dyserth, gentleman.

In 1832 the Welsh Pool Gas Company introduced the new illuminant into the town.

In that year our future Queen, the Princess Victoria, with her mother the Duchess of Kent, paid a visit to Powis Castle, which was the occasion of great festivities at both town and castle.

In 1839 Christ Church was built, by public subscriptions, in celebration of the coming-of-age of Viscount Clive. The consecration of the church was performed in 1841.

In 1849 there was a dreadful visitation of the cholera at Pool, which ended, as such plagues usually do, with a general overhauling of the public and private sanitary arrangements, and the subsequent adoption of the *Public Health Act* by the authorities. Since the "cholera year", many thousands of pounds have been expended upon the water supply and the sewage of the "Inner District" of the

borough. Welsh Pool is now one of the healthiest towns in the kingdom.

As the administrative capital of the county, the two county forces —the Yeomanry and the Militia—have their headquarters at Pool. In 1852 the latter regiment ceased to be recruited by conscription, and voluntary enlistment was adopted.

In August, 1856, there were great rejoicings at the return home from the Crimea of the hero, General Sir Percy E. Herbert, Quarter-master-General of the British forces. The present Earl of Powis is Sir Percy's son.

In the following year the Railway—that pioneer of civilisation—was brought to Welsh Pool, during the mayoralty of Mr. Robert Owen. The cutting of the first sod of the future Cambrian Railways took place near the old Domen.

In 1859 the Volunteer Movement was started here.

During the "Sixties" the old Welsh Town again sprung up—this time as a residential suburb. In the same decade the railway to Shrewsbury was opened; the Smithfield and the Public Water Works constructed; the main streets were paved; and many other public works effected.

During the mayoralty of Mr. Abraham Howell, in 1865, Cilcewydd Bridge over the Severn was rebuilt.

On August 8th, 1868, the town was *en fête* upon the home-coming of another hero—Lord Napier of Magdala—fresh from the Abyssinian campaign., Lady Napier's home at that time was Trelydan Hall, within the borough.

In 1871-2, during the mayoralty of Mr. T. Morris, Leighton Bridge over the Severn was erected.

In 1871 St. Mary's Church was restored, at a cost of £4,150, from the designs of G. E. Street, the great architect of the Gothic Revival. The church at the same time was made "free and open".

On April 15th, 1872, the old colours of the Militia were hung up in St. Mary's.

In 1873-4, during the mayoralty of Mr. D. P. Owen, the new handsome Town Hall was erected at a cost of £6,000 (exclusive of site). The canopy over the old Corporation pew in the parish church, together with its gilt figure of "Justice", was erected over the judge's seat in the new Assize Court.

In 1875 the Powys-land Museum was opened.

In 1877 the strength of the Militia was raised to nineteen commissioned and sixty non-commissioned officers, and 600 rank-and-file. On May 1st, 1883, the new colours of the regiment (now the 4th battalion, South Wales Borderers) were consecrated: the ceremony taking place on Maes Gwastad.

In 1882 the flannel and tweed industry of the town was revived by the opening of the Powys-land mills.

In 1882 the Lord Mayor of London and his suite paid a state visit to Welsh Pool, when they were the guests of the municipality.

In 1883, during the mayoralty of Mr. S. Salter, Buttington Bridge over the Severn was rebuilt.

The Queen's Jubilee was duly celebrated in 1887 by imposing civic, military, and ecclesiastical functions. One outcome of the Jubilee was the opening of the Free Public Library in 1888 (Mr. D. Richards, mayor). At the same time, the Museum and Art School were handed over to the Corporation by deed of gift of the Powys-land Club—at the instance of the late Mr. M. C. Jones, Gungrog.

In 1890 the Borough was divided for electoral purposes into four wards, viz. :—The Castle, Buttington, Guilsfield, and Llanerchydol.

In 1890 excavations were carried on at the site of the Abbey.

Throughout the whole of 1894 a hot contest was waged between the County and Borough authorities as to the municipal territory of the latter. The County Council wished to detach the more rural townships from the Borough, in order to form Parish Councils in them. However, after a Government Inquiry had been held, the burgesses of Pool came out victorious ; and thus Edward de Cherleton's boundary-line of 1406 was preserved.

In 1895, during the mayoralty of Mr. C. E. Howell, the Powys Eisteddfod was once more held beneath the walls of Castell Coch.

In the same year, the Montgomeryshire and Denbighshire regiments of Yeomanry Cavalry "brigaded" at Welsh Pool.

In 1896 the questions of most urgent interest to the burgesses of Pool seem to be these :—(1) the new County Intermediate Schools, (2) the proposed Railway to Llanfair and other places in Caereinion ; (3) the claim of Welsh Pool to be the future seat of the University Court of Wales, and (4) a new Shooting Range, in place of the old one, on the Golfa, condemned by the military authorities.

On June 25th, 1896, the Prince and Princess of Wales stopped at Welsh Pool for a few minutes, whilst they were *en route* for Machynlleth and Aberystwyth. The object of the Prince's journey was his installation as the first Chancellor of the University of Wales. No Prince of Wales had visited Welsh Pool since the days of Owen Glyndwr, but that militant prince's visit to the town, in 1401, was not the occasion of much rejoicing ; neither were the visits of the two Llewelyns—in 1233 and 1275 respectively—fraught with happy results to the burgesses. Under more auspicious circumstances a Prince of Wales visited Pool in 1896. The motto that first greeted him at the railway-station was an appropriate quotation from Sir Lewis Morris's special *Ode :*

> "Our lost Llewelyn seems again to come,
> For love of learning to his ancient home."

The Royal Party was met at the station by the Mayor (Mr. Addie), the Directors and chief officials of the Cambrian Railways, the Militia, and a special choir of two hundred voices ; and thus the Prince of Wales received a fitting welcome upon his first visit to Powys-land.

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